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CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

A STUDY IN NEW TESTAMENT MORALITY

BY THE

REV. T. B. KILPATRICK, B.D.

ABERDEEN.

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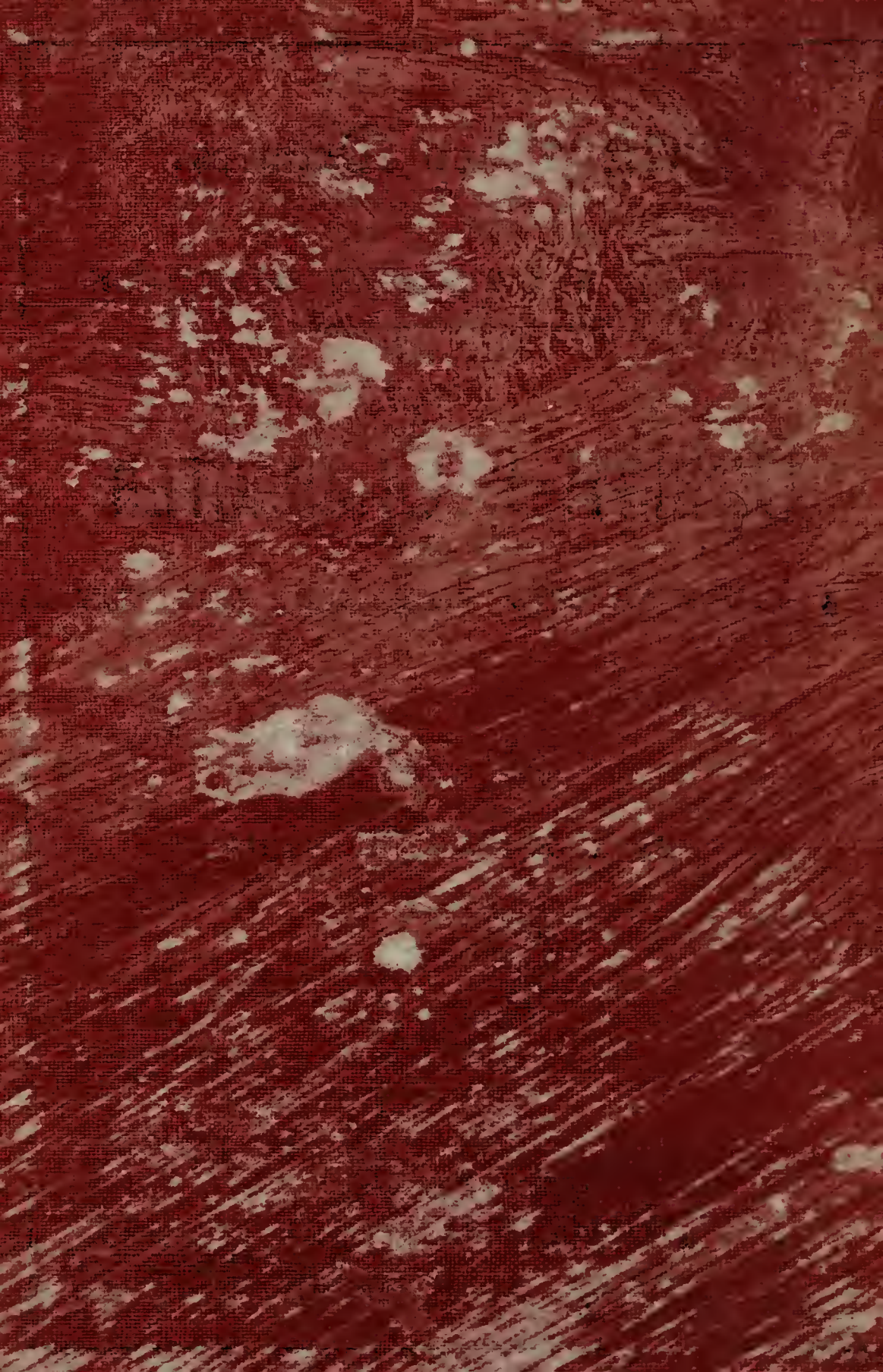

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CHRISTIAN CHARACTER:

A STUDY IN NEW TESTAMENT MORALITY.

—o—

INTRODUCTION.

The Importance of Character.

Character is man's true Self, that which he really is. What a man has, rank, possessions, and the like, is clearly distinct from himself. He may *have* copious advantages; he may *be* the poorest thing that breathes. Even what a man does is not identical with himself, though it is often all that the world can judge him by. A man may *do* great things which put their stamp on history, and influence the lives of all subsequent generations, and yet *be* himself greater or less than his works. The character makes the man. If that be fair and good, the man is worthy. Character is the highest achievement, the mightiest influence, amid the thousands which enter into the complex life of man. "To get good is animal, to do good is human, to be good is divine. The true use of a man's possessions is to help his work, and the best end of all his work is to show us what he is. The noblest workers of our world bequeath us nothing so great as the image of themselves."[a]

a Martineau, Sermon on "Having, Doing, and Being," in *Endeavours after a Christian Life.*

When we approach the study of character, and inform ourselves even generally about it, one fact establishes itself with axiomatic certainty, the Christian character presented in the New Testament is a type absolutely new in the moral history of the race, of unique and commanding excellence. It is a fact, let evolutionists make of it what they will, that there is finality in morals. This is the highest, the absolute, the ideal. The evolution of man is towards a type already manifested. This conviction is not reached by depreciating anything in man's history. We do all justice to the type of Greek or Roman virtue, and we appeal to instances of heroism, which classic history presents as a stimulus to Christians. We do justice to the type of character presented in the Old Testament, and this, to some minds, is even more difficult than fairly to appreciate the classic type. And when we have done this, and have entered most fully into the elements of grandeur and beauty presented in Greek sage, Roman soldier or statesman, Hebrew psalmist or prophet, we pass to the New Testament with the distinct conviction that here we have a type congruous indeed with the others, and gathering into itself their excellences, yet supreme in its own loveliness, attracting to itself as they never did the admiration and loyalty of heart and intellect, perpetuated as they never were, nor could have been, in the lives and deaths, not of a select few, but of unnumbered multitudes. Of this New Testament type it has been well said, "A copy of the 'mind of Christ,' it came with new and unthought-of possibilities of goodness. It was no dream, no specula-

tion, no theory on paper or literary picture. It has proved itself by the continual trial of centuries, and by a thousand tests ; by infinitely varied images of mercy, nobleness, self-discipline, self-devotion ; by the martyr's fortitude and the missionary's sacrifice, proved itself in many a patient and suffering life, in many a generous enterprise, in many a holy death-bed, in the blessed peace and innocence of countless homes" (Dean Church, *Discipline of the Christian Character*).

In Christian character, therefore, we find God's end in the creation of man set forth. This is man as God meant him to be. There is no worthier ambition for man than to enter into God's mind regarding him, and to make God's design for him his own resolute endeavour. To become what God would have him be ought to be the passion of man's heart. Any conception of life, even though it be couched in religious phraseology, which falls short of this is inadequate and misleading. Especially destructive will any representation of Christianity be which makes it possible for a man to imagine that he can be right with God when he is not pressing forward to the realisation of God's aim. Denial of character as the be-all and end-all of religion is worse than intellectual error. Intellectual error may not touch the springs of spiritual life. Moral stagnation is death.

It behoves young men and women, therefore, in uniting themselves with the Christian Church, to consider well the career upon which they enter. If all they hope and desire is conformity to a conventional standard of thought and action, sufficient to

make them comfortable in the assurance of future happiness, they lose their pains. Whatever they may be nominally, they are not really Christians. To be a Christian is to be committed to a career whose goal is the Christian character (Rom. viii. 29). Unless they set out with the resolution to become what God in His Word declares He designs them to be, they had better not enter at all on the profession of a Christian. Their entrance is a beginning, not a termination. The Christian life, with the Christian character as its glory, cannot be dissected and its elements analysed. It can only be understood by living it, and it can be lived only by the inspiration of God. There can be no text-book of the Christian life. Yet life ought to be made the subject of reflection and study. Clear thinking will help right acting. Every intelligent and high-minded young man or woman will set life forth in many an hour of serious thought. The sole aim of the following pages is to help them in such meditations, and to aid them in making more clear to themselves the ideal they have set before them.

CHAPTER I.

The Source of Christian Character.

Christian character dates from the Person of Christ. It came into the world with Him. It has maintained itself in the world by immediate inspiration from Him. He is the source of its power, and He is the goal of its aspiration.

In claiming this for our Master, we do not find ourselves in any serious opposition to those who profess no adherence to the doctrines of Christianity. The supremacy of Jesus Christ is unquestioned in the sphere of morals. It is our contention, however, that He holds this position, and is, in races and in individuals, the source and energy of all upward movement in ethics, because He is what His disciples, within three days of His death, found Him to be, no mere memory, however lovely and pathetic, but a living Person, with whom it was possible to have real fellowship. In studying Christ as the source of Christian character, let us view Him under three aspects, as Moral Teacher, as Example and Standard, and as Redeemer.

A. CHRIST AS MORAL TEACHER.—We hold it to be, indeed, impossible, strictly speaking, to consider Jesus Christ merely as a teacher. In all His moral teaching He is consciously and avowedly speaking, not as a mere enquirer, like Socrates, or a mere commentator, like the scribes and lawyers of His own day, but as King, revealing the constitution of the Kingdom of God, portraying the character of its citizens, and binding His rules upon men as obligations to Himself. Keeping this in view, however, it is practically convenient to look for a little at His teaching by itself. As we rise from the study of that teaching, doubtless our most vivid impression will be that of its astounding novelty. What He Himself said of the Commandment of Love, that it was new (John xiii. 34, 35), we apply to the whole scope of His ethic ; it is emphatically a new thing

in the earth. To institute a comparison between it and that of Plato and Aristotle would lead us too far afield.[a]

The teaching of Jesus, however, stands in close and conscious relation to the moral code of the Old Testament. This was the text-book of the religious teachers of His time, and in its morality His contemporaries were trained. He was Himself profoundly conscious of the contrast between His own teaching and that which the people were receiving, a contrast in which was involved the whole transference from the old dispensation to the new. In this contrast we observe three outstanding features:—

1. THE EMPHASIS UPON MOTIVE.—The morality of the Old Testament dealt mainly with outward action, and could, accordingly, be expressed in a code. It is true that there is much more in the Old Testament than this. Its conception of the divine ideal for man is much more than adherence to a scheme of laws. Its insight into sin is far deeper than mere breach of an enactment. Its hope of salvation is far higher than mere escape from consequences of breach of law. At the same time, this, which is more than law, in which the revelation of grace shall be clearly made, is still for the Old Testament an expectation of the time to come. Its immediate demands can only be expressed in legal form. It confronts conscience with a code. The scribes were not in error in regarding the morality of the inspired books confided to their keeping as a system of legislation.

a A short but most helpful introduction to such a comparative study will be found in "The Christian Ethic," by Professor Knight of St Andrews.

But they were profoundly in error in not perceiving that the keeping of enactments cannot constitute a real righteousness, and may even be made a cover for deep inward impurity. By this error the teaching of the scribes was entirely vitiated. They preached a false standard, laid upon conscience an intolerable burden, and had for inevitable failure no remedy whatever. By this error also their lives were deeply tainted, so that the records of their time present absolute justification for the sternest woes pronounced by Jesus (Matt. xxiii. 13-36).

Jesus in His teaching penetrates beneath the outward action, and lays absolute emphasis on motive. He is concerned, not with an outward conformity to law, which may be complete and yet grossly insincere, and which, even if sincere, cannot, in its very nature, constitute the perfection of character, but with the inner springs of action, the state of the heart, the attitude of the man to God and duty. These Law cannot reach, and till they are reached Law cannot be, in the highest sense, kept. This is the standpoint from which He criticises the morality of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. v. 20). In the course of the Sermon on the Mount He speaks of the Old Testament legislation regarding murder, adultery, oaths, retaliation, and love of our neighbour, and points out its limitations and its incapacity to produce real righteousness, while at the same time He indicates the manifestation of the Kingdom type of character in respect to these matters. Passages abound in which the same emphasis on motive is laid. Specially noteworthy is Matt. xv. 16-20. So thoroughly blinded were the disciples by the con-

ventional morality of the day that they could not understand what really defiled a man. *Cf.* also Matt. vii. 21 ; xviii. 35.

Being thus inward and spiritual, the morality which Christ taught cannot be forced into a code. It is true we might conceivably write down a list of injunctions, precepts, and rules compiled from the words of Jesus, but they would in no sense constitute His moral teaching. We could not exhaust it in ten thousand commandments. Jesus did not even attempt, as Greek moralists from their intellectual attitude necessarily did, to draw up a list of virtues embodying the type of character He desired to prevail. His style of teaching is informal, occasional, and often paradoxical. We gather His meaning chiefly from instances and illustrations, not because His ethic is shallow or fragmentary, but because it touches the depths of man's spirit, and comprehends the whole of his manifold experience.

2. THE POSITIVE NATURE OF THE PRECEPTS. —It follows from the character of Old Testament morality as a legislation, that its precepts are largely negative in form. Its characteristic expression is, "Thou shalt not." In truth, legislation necessarily concerns itself with restraining rather than stimulating and guiding action. This is by no means to cast a slight on the function of restraint, as a most useful moral discipline. It is true—as opponents of the temperance cause never fail to remind us—that we cannot make a man sober by act of Parliament. But we can, by act of Parliament, lay such restraints upon his actions, as shall prevent him doing injury to himself or others, and

we do, therefore, open up possibilities of real moral advancement. At the same time, this function of restraint, even when supported by all manner of deterrents in the shape of threatened penalties, is necessarily very limited in the sphere of its influence, and can never amount to a renewal of character or reformation. For this there is wanted a regenerative touch laid on heart and will, the springs of action and source of character. This is what Christ proposes to do. He seeks to capture the inner citadel of man's nature, to bring the man himself into harmony with the highest good, so that all his actions shall emanate from the constraint of an accepted principle of life. *Constraint*, not *restraint*, is the key-note of New Testament morality. Christ's characteristic phrase is "Thou shalt," rather than "Thou shalt not"; and "Follow me," rather than "Thou shalt."

The originality of the brief compendium of duty known as the Golden Rule lies in the change from negative to positive form. According to a well-known story, an inquirer demanded of Shammai to be taught the law while he stood on one foot. Shammai drove him away with indignation. Of Hillel the inquirer made the same request, and he, with greater insight, at once replied, "Whatsoever thou wouldest that men should not do to thee, that do not thou to them. All our law is summed up in this saying." Similarly a saying of Confucius is reported, "True reciprocity consists in not doing to others what you would not want done to yourself." The form of our Lord's injunction—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do

ye even so to them"—carries with it much more than a verbal change. It transfers the secret of character from the outskirts to the centre, and implies an inner determination of will towards the fulfilment of the highest good. The author of "Ecce Homo" brings out the special feature of Christian ethic thus: "To the duty of not doing harm, which may be called justice, was added the duty of doing good, which may properly receive the distinctively Christian name of Charity."

The same central conception of morality is conveyed in Christ's dealing with the Young Ruler (Luke xviii. 18-23). The young man claimed to have kept the law, and no doubt he had kept it barely as law. The one thing he lacked was the inward surrender of heart, which, in action, should not limit itself to restraints or wait on an outward voice, but should be an abiding and positive constraint. This the Master demanded, and this, with quick apprehension of the comprehensive nature of the demand, far exceeding the most elaborate code, the young man sorrowfully refused.

The same idea appears in the parable of the talents, in the boundless indignation of the Master toward the slothful servant (Matt. xxv. 26-30).

In the kingdom of heaven there are no specified limits, by simply keeping within which a man may keep clear of condemnation. The Kingdom itself is within us "as a great yearning," to use George Eliot's phrase, or rather as an irresistible spring of eager energy. This man, who hid his lord's money, displayed by his mere inactivity the absence of this inner spring, and thus revealed his real disloyalty.

Of this feature of His moral teaching, the Master is Himself the best illustration. He "went about," not merely keeping clear of evil, but "doing good."

3. THE UNIVERSAL SCOPE.—This aspect is an inference, rather than an actual definition of the Master's. Old Testament morality was, in the nature of the case, for Jews. It is true that where the evangelic interest becomes conscious, as *e.g.*, pre-eminently in the second part of Isaiah, there is also the presence of universalism. Even so, however, Jerusalem is centre of the new economy, and the type of life is distinctively Jewish: Is. xliv. 5; xlix. 22, 23; lv. 5; lx. 3-10; lxvi. 19-21. In our Lord's own day, the morality of the Pharisees had made systematic what had been the necessary limitation of the prophetic vision; and had drawn the hardest line of demarcation between Jew and Gentile, and even between Jew and Samaritan. Across this line duty scarcely existed, and love could not flow. A morality which rose above legalism, and found its domain not in enactments but in motives, could not tolerate such limits. Our Lord's moral teaching does not retain even the Jewish cast, which the prophetic teaching could not avoid, and tacitly denies all such racial limitations as the Pharisaic code maintained. The question was once brought before him in distinct form in the Lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbour?" The whole spirit of legalism breathes in the question. The very breath of the new ethic is felt in the answer, couched, as it was, in that parabolic form, which our Lord was wont to adopt, in dealing with the unintelligent, or the

unsympathetic. The figure of the Good Samaritan proclaims, once for all, the universality of New Testament morality. It opens the possibility of the highest life to men of all races, and of every form of civilisation, and summons them to pursue it. Herein lies the suitability of Christianity as a universal religion. It does not destroy nationality, nor lead an attack on outward forms, where these do not subvert fundamental conditions of moral life. It offers itself to Hindus or Chinese as the ideal life for them. This has proved one of the preparatives of the heathen world for the reception of Christianity. "I am not a Christian," said the Prince of Travancore in 1874, "but I accept Christian ethics in their entirety."

But the entirety of Christian ethic leads to Christ as Saviour. If, then, the teaching of Jesus could mean so much to one who was not a Christian, how much more ought it to be to those who see in Jesus much more than a Teacher? If He be our Teacher, our Christian life is nothing less than discipleship, and it becomes a first charge upon our time and strength to acquaint ourselves with His teaching, to be diligent students of His express words, to seek to catch the spirit which breathes through His special sayings, to open our whole being to the impression of His mind, the control of His will. It is the specific quality of this teaching that it can never be known till it is practised. The test of acquaintance with it and possession of it lies in action and conduct, as these register our moral assimilation to the truths for which we profess admiration; only thus, as He told His disciples,

do we escape the doom of unimproved knowledge, John xiii. 17.

B. CHRIST AS STANDARD: HIS EXAMPLE.—As a moral teacher, Christ takes rank with other moral teachers who have left their stamp on the morality of the races to which they belonged. His superiority in this aspect is evinced by the fact that His teaching has been accepted as the rule of life by races widely different from that to which He Himself belonged, and has proved itself to be adapted to the requirements of mankind in general. When we enquire into the causes of this, we are led beyond the contents of the teaching itself, and are compelled to seek them in the Person of the Teacher. Had the teaching survived in book form, without any personality to irradiate it and give it life, it is questionable if it would have held a larger place in the minds of men to-day than that of Confucius. It is the Person of Christ which gives power to His teaching.

When we consider further the connection between the Person and the Teaching, we find that the one is the embodiment, manifestation, and realization of the other. Had the relation of Jesus to His teaching been that of Socrates to his, His words would no doubt, like those of Socrates, have had many beautiful and pathetic associations derived from His manner of living and dying, and would have been influential in the line of His disciples, in the same sense and degree as those of Socrates were. The special power and world-wide influence of the teaching of Jesus, we therefore conclude, are due to

the fact that He was, in a sense to which Socrates never attained, the example of His own words. The morality which Jesus taught, He lived. It is not a literary memorial, but a fact of the moral sphere, unique and commanding. The example of Jesus, therefore, verifies His moral teaching, and sets it forth as the ideal of human excellence. To trace the example of Jesus in its manifold application to daily life is a task of inexhaustible interest, but it belongs to special departments of biblical study. Here we can only point out such general aspects of Christ's example as bear upon the Christian life as a whole.

1. ITS VALIDITY.—It is possible to present the example of Christ in such a form as to deprive it of its value as an instance for our profitable study. If Christ's moral perfection be treated as a mere inference from His divinity, an air of unreality is cast over it. It ceases to have practical value for human beings. Similarly, if we assert that Christ was not divine, and therefore could not be perfect, we are approaching the subject with a pre-supposition quite as abstract, and quite as destructive of its real interest and meaning. The view given in the narratives of Christ's life, and in the New Testament generally, is that Christ was a man, and possessed a true and perfect human goodness. His example is the instance of a human life, to be studied by those who have the same life to live, and grasped as the ideal for them. No doubt the conditions under which Christ lived his human life differ in several important respects from those to which we are subject. But it is to be clearly observed that the

conditions in His case were not easier, the struggle involved not slighter. Magnify the difference between Him and us to the dimensions assigned in Scripture, we still find in Christ a case of a truly moral development, and are prohibited from offering as excuse for our not attaining to His likeness the contention that He was not genuinely a man. The temptation in the wilderness, let critics make of its form what they will, remains a human experience, differing from what we know of temptation only in the terror of the attack and the splendour of the victory. From the record of that incident we know that it was not solitary in the experience of the Son of Man. Again, and yet again, in His life He met that onslaught, and knew the pressure of that temptation ; and thus from the story of His human experience we justify the expressions of Heb. ii. 17 ; iv. 15 ; v. 7 ; and rejoice to know that the victorious Christ belongs to the domain of human warfare and human possibilities.

2. ITS PERFECTION.—We frankly admit that this is essential to Christian ethic no less than to Christian theology. If, as we contend, the morality of Christ be absolute and universal, the example of Christ must be perfect. Prove it to be imperfect, and at once it becomes conceivable that a better man might be the revealer of a higher morality. The burden of proof here lies plainly with those who impugn the absolute goodness of Christ, and on this point we rest satisfied. The world has not lacked those who had the will to prove Him at fault, and if they have failed, as they conspicuously have failed, to make out their case, we may confi-

dently draw the inference that the thing they tried to do is impossible. The character of Christ, His critics being judges, remains untouched. We go even further, and maintain that insight into the character of Christ, as into every other aspect of His personality, is not within the reach of merely logical processes, and can be attained only in that Christian experience which consists in direct fellowship with Himself. At the same time there are lines of thought which, if they do not amount to verification, suggest an inference of overwhelming force.

(*a.*) *The Incidents of His Life.*—It has been contended that we have only a small selection of the words and deeds of Christ, and that we have not before us the material for a correct estimate of His character. It has even been suggested that we have as much evidence for the sinlessness of such a man as the Apostle James as for that of Christ.

If mere enumeration of sayings and acts were all that is required for the estimate of character, we might admit the forcibleness of this reasoning. We do not know all that Jesus said and did. We do not need to know all. We study what has been given to us. We perceive in all we know of Him the unity of a personal life, the vital presence of a character harmonious with itself in all its manifestations. We know this Man. If, therefore, we find in his whole behaviour full correspondence with the will of God, if every attempt to show a discord between His will and the highest goodness and truth has utterly failed, the conviction masters our judgment that He was

not as other men, subject to passion, the slave of self-will, that in Him the highest ideal found complete, unhindered realisation. We rise from the contemplation of His character with an awe upon our souls as of those who have seen the Highest. Even coarse natures like that of Napoleon have felt the thrill of it, if he is accurately reported in the saying attributed to him—"I know men. This is no mere man." This impression is confirmed when we learn that it is precisely that which the personality of Jesus made upon those who were brought into spiritual contact with Him, and who were not such as could conceivably have been influenced by prejudice in His favour. This conviction throbs with intolerable pain through the heart of the traitor as the consequences of his deed break upon his intelligence. This conviction, deepening through every stage of the trial, pierces to the quick the soul of Pilate, case-hardened as he was with cynical selfishness. This conviction, seized and cherished in the last hours of agony, gave the malefactor crucified with Him courage to offer the prayer that opened for him the gate of paradise. Add to this the testimony of those who lived in daily intimacy with Him, who, when He was with them, gave to Him a worship impossible had his character not stood the test of such close scrutiny, and who, when He was withdrawn from their bodily vision, lived to proclaim a message of which his absolute moral perfection was an essential element (Acts ii. 22 ; 1 Peter ii. 22 ; 2 Cor. v. 21 ; Heb. vii. 26). Proof in a technical sense we may not have. Yet the conclusion we come to is one, the converse of which

makes all evidence unreliable, and confounds all our estimates of men.

(*b.*) *His own Consciousness.*—Holy men are the first to confess their personal unworthiness. If those whom we have supposed to be holy decline or omit the confession of sin, we at once question their sanctity, and frequently have our suspicions certified by the moral falls which haunt spiritual vain-gloriousness as a Nemesis. But Christ never confessed sin. The most touching part of spiritual biographies is to be found in the record of conflict with evil habit, the expressions of sorrow for defilement, and aspiration after higher holiness. Such record and such phrases have no place in the recorded life of Christ. We do, indeed, read of the trouble of His soul; we are admitted to the spectacle of His agony; but, in all the anguish, there is not a hint that His own sin added one drop of bitterness to the cup he drank. Far otherwise, we read His own implicit claim to sinlessness (John viii. 46). More significant still are his assertions of absolute spiritual harmony between Him and God, a harmony which the remotest moral difference, the faintest divergence of will, would have utterly destroyed (Matt. xi. 27; John xiv. 7-11). If He were not morally perfect, such claims are worse than baseless. In making them He was either so morally blind as not to know when He was coming short of the highest standard, or so radically false that He deliberately said those things with intention to deceive. In either case His character not merely fails of perfection, but falls far short of the height to which many common men have attained. Either

alternative is at once intolerable and absurd. A far more rational view is to see in these claims of Christ, advanced as they were so simply, without parade or self-assertion, the utterance of His consciousness of the fact that there did exist such relationship to the Father as these records imply. Grant that the relationship existed, it could not fail to express itself, and to find for itself just such expressions as these. The very claim, therefore, which in the case of a sinful man would have laid him open to severest condemnation, becomes in Christ an evidence conclusive of His sinlessness.

3. ITS AUTHORITY.—To say that Christ's example presents us with the type of absolute moral perfection is to say that it is at the same time authoritative in the sphere of action. Without anticipating what will have to be said later on as to the nature of conscience, it is enough to point out here that man as a personal being has the faculty of recognising ideal excellence whenever it is presented to him, and is therefore under obligation to seek that excellence as soon as recognised. The law was to Israel, and law is to all men, in one stage of moral discipline, the form in which the good is revealed to conscience. But law contains in itself confession of its own failure to accomplish the moral perfecting of man, and points beyond itself,—is, as Paul says, our tutor *to bring us unto* Christ (Gal. iii. 24). Christ as perfect example fulfils the law (Matt. v. 17). What confronts us is no longer a code, but a Person, the standard and rule of moral life. His teaching carries conviction of its truth, because it is part of Himself, and is illustrated and verified by all He

said and did. His life becomes itself teaching, or, more properly, legislation. Thus the author of "Ecce Homo" finely says: "The law which Christ gave was not only illustrated, but infinitely enlarged by his deeds. For every deed was itself a precedent to be followed, and therefore to discuss the legislation of Christ is to discuss his character; for it may be justly said that Christ himself is the Christian Law."

The supremacy of Christ in the domain of morals is admitted even by those who yield to Him no higher function than that of Example. The often-quoted words of J. S. Mill may be here repeated: "Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique Figure, not more unlike all his predecessors than all his followers. . . . Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in selecting this Man as the ideal Representative, and Guide of Humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." And if we assign to Him a higher function, are bound to Him by closer ties, and look to Him for more than guidance, the obligation of accepting His authority is only the deeper and more imperative. The Christian life can be nothing less than the Imitation of Christ. As such He Himself conceives it (John xiii. 15), and as such, the Christian conscience acknowledges it to be (1 John ii. 6), and this Christian men have in all ages sought to make it (1 Cor. xi. 1; Heb. vi. 12).

It is altogether misleading to represent the Imitation of Christ as a kind of "counsel of perfection" not meant to be seriously taken by common Christians. It is an imperative binding on all who accept Him as the Standard; His being more than a Standard giving to the imperative a more strenuous moral power. The young especially ought to understand that in accepting Christ, and joining His Church, they are committing themselves to nothing less than this ceaseless imitation.

C. CHRIST AS REDEEMER.—So far, then, we have reached these results—Christ, as Moral Teacher, has revealed the ideal life for man; Christ, as Example, has in His own person realised it. It is plain, however, that if this were all, the advantage of His presence in the earth would be, as far as the vast majority of our race is concerned, but small indeed. Of what avail is it that one Individual has realised the ideal, if unnumbered millions necessarily for ever come short of it? His presence to our gaze only adds to the misery of which we are conscious in coming short. We may even say that the presence of a sinful being would be more helpful to us in our efforts after virtue. If Christ be perfect, and if He be no more than a Perfect Pattern, He will be merely a perpetual condemnation of our imperfection, a ceaseless mockery of our helplessness. How, moreover, on such a supposition, are we to construe His character? If He were conscious, on the one hand, of His own sinlessness, and on the other of His inability to lift men out of their sins, He must have been, He ought to have been, the most utterly wretched Being who ever

stood on the surface of this sin-cursed world. If He were not, there must have been something amiss with His perfection, something that came short of perfect moral goodness. If He is not more than Example, He is not even that.

In point of fact, it is impossible to do justice to the study of His character, presented in the four Gospels, without seeing that He is more than Example, that He is, what the New Testament declares Him to have been, what our human need demands, Redeemer also. We are not here concerned with systematic theology, but we cannot consider the Christian character without pausing to note at least the outlines of the great deed which is the ground of its possibility.

1. THE NEED OF MAN.—One word sums up the need of man—sin. He has other necessities. The State and the Church cannot afford to neglect them. But deeper than the evils of political bondage, of physical surroundings, of intellectual ignorance, lies, as their root and spring, the evil of sin. More imperative than the need of enfranchisement or social reform or education is the need of redemption. Not till sin has been dealt with, and put out of the way, can any upward movement for the individual or for society be possible.

(*a.*) *The Nature of Sin.*—Sin is traced in Scripture to the deed of man's will opposing itself to the will of God. Read the story of the Creation and the Fall as an account of the moral constitution of the race, and we learn two things—that God meant man, as an independent personality, to live in harmony with Himself, in all the joy and the splen-

did possibilities of development which that fellowship would secure; and that man, in the exercise of that freedom which was an essential element of his constitution as a person, declined this harmony, and broke away into the false liberty of alienation from God. It is of first importance in the study of character to fix attention on the nature of sin as an act of will. Many circumstances tend to obscure this fundamental fact. Many interests combine to stigmatise this view as harsh, intolerant, and unsympathetic. In reality, the only hope for man's redemption lies in the fact that sin is his, his own deed, for which he is responsible.

It may seem a milder view to say that he is not responsible, that heredity and environment have made him what he is. But it is to be observed that, in denying to him responsibility, there is denied to him personality. He is rescued from blame, at the cost of his dignity as a man. This view of man as not responsible, while it has found fresh support in modern science, is as old at least as the time of Ezekiel. He, too, was confronted with the doctrine, urged partly in despair and partly in excuse of sin, that a man's sin is no more than the consequence of his forefathers' actions. Against it he sets like a rock the fact of individual responsibility. This is the basis of divine judgment. Neither in caprice nor revenge will God in judging a man take into consideration anything else than the fact of *his* sin. "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die." (*See* Ezekiel xviii. 4, and the whole chapter.) Similarly, James is troubled with the sophisticated piety of those who argue—God does

everything; consequently, when I sin, it is God who has led me to it. He replies, first, by a solemn assertion of the holiness of God (i. 13), then by an analysis of the act of sin (vers. 14, 15). It begins in desire; desire awakens will, and so sin is born. The act may not yet have been perpetrated, but when the will has determined, there is the conception of sin. Man rising in the might of will to assert himself against God, that is sin.

(*b.*) *The Forms of Sin.*—From this view of sin, as the revolt of self against God, it is evidently impossible to catalogue, or even in any satisfactory way to classify the sins men may commit. Just as no code can prescribe all moral duties, so no code could be devised to particularise and forbid all forms of evil. The question so often asked, "Is it wrong to do so and so"? cannot be answered by reference to a rule. Sin is the claim of Self to rule in opposition to God, and the instances in which this may occur defy classification. Nowhere in the New Testament is the attempt made. The most complete list is that which occurs in Gal. v. 19-21, in which there are four classes—(1) Sensual passions; (2) unlawful dealings in things spiritual; (3) violations of brotherly love; (4) intemperate excesses. (*See* Lightfoot *in loc.*) But this list, while wonderfully wide in range, is determined by its reference to the peculiar circumstances, and possibly to the special temperament of those to whom the epistle is addressed. Perhaps the most complete classification is that which considers man as standing in relation to God, to his own animal nature, and to the world. Hence arise—(1) Pride, man claiming a

false superiority; (2) Sensuality, man sinking beneath his true dignity; (3) Covetousness, man seeking a false satisfaction. These forms appear in Dante's great poem. Pride, as a hungry lion; Sensuality, as a spotted panther; Covetousness, as a famished wolf. It is at once truer, and more practically important, to observe that sin, being, what it is, opposition of will to God, has endless ramifications, appears in a thousand forms, and assumes the most bewildering transformations. Hence the Scriptures lay great stress on the "deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. iii. 13; 2 Thess. ii. 10; Eph. iv. 22; Jer. xvii. 9). Any one of these forms leads us back to the fountainhead of evil, and raises the whole problem of deliverance.

(*c.*) *The Consequences of Sin.*—If sin be understood thus as a breach of a personal fellowship between man created in God's image and God, for whose glory he is created, and in whom he finds the completeness of his own being, we see at once the gravest quality of sin; it sets man forth guilty in God's sight.

Behind the special laws we may have broken, behind even the persons we have injured, is God, against whom we have sinned, whose will we have defied, whose Love we have outraged; Ps. li. 4. With guilt comes condemnation. As a sinner, man is without doubt subject to the wrath of God. Let us not make this anger unethical. God is love; His anger is the anger of holy love, aflame for the fulfilment of its design. Let us be careful also not to refine it to unreality. Admit that the language is anthropomorphic. Eliminate all that we know

to belong to the anger of sinful man, personal resentment, caprice, revenge. There still remains anger as God's moral attitude toward sin and sinners. He has passed, cannot by His own nature but pass, sentence of condemnation upon sinners. At the same time, while condemnation comes upon sinners in name of God, it comes in strict accord with the nature of sin itself. It is not something foreign added to sin, but is the development and expression of what sin in its own nature is. God drove out the man ; Gen. iii. 24. But sin in itself is separation from God. There is native and necessary incongruity between sin and God's presence and fellowship. No language could do justice to the terror of this thought, and the language of Scripture is studiously calm as befits the unimaginable awfulness of the theme ; see 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 21 ; Rev. xxi. 27. This, then, is the position of the sinner. He has alienated himself from God. He stands guilty, condemned, in God's sight. It is idle to speak to such a being of reformation, of imitating the example of Christ, and following His teachings. The man must be reached ere his character be improved. But the man is a sinner, alienated from God. He must be reconciled to God before character in any genuine sense can be formed in him. Christian character requires redemption as the ground of its possibility.

2. THE WORK OF CHRIST.—Here also we are in the domain of theology proper. We may have little to do with theories of the atonement. We have, however, everything to do with a Deed and

its Significance for us. Between man and a new life for him lies Sin. The deed which alone meets the case is sin-bearing. That One, who was God, should bear the sin of man is required by the circumstances of the case. Nothing else can be a perfect propitiation, nothing else can make atonement, bring back the broken harmony of God and man in which alone lies hope for sinners; and nothing less than this is a fair construction to be put on the words of Christ regarding His death, or the words of His followers as they strove to express the infinite meanings of the Death they at first so piteously misunderstood. Passages are too numerous even to refer to; but see especially Matt. xx. 28; and the words of institution at the last Supper; Rom. iv. 25; v. 6-11; 2 Cor. v. 18-21; Ephes. ii. 12-17; Heb. ix. 28; 1 Peter ii. 24, 25.

It is the task of theology to gather together the various lights thrown by these and other passages of Scripture into the depths of the mystery of love; to set the truth, thus established, in relation to morality, exhibiting its harmony with every aspect of God's character, and to reason, showing how it harmonises with, while at the same time it transcends, the highest intellectual powers which God has implanted in man; and to vindicate for it its place as the heart and centre of the Gospel message. The moral fact established by the atoning death of Christ is the reconciliation of God and man, the undoing of the consequences of Sin, the bringing together of God and man into that harmony of will which was God's design in creation. In one word, the death of Christ is the foundation of

the Kingdom of God. Men, alienated by sin, are now gathered under the sovereign sway of God to begin the career so fearfully interrupted by their transgression. The moral world is not a scene of mere tumult and despair, man plunging ever deeper into transgression, seeking and never finding satisfaction. There has been constituted, in the death of the Redeemer, that kingdom, of which the ancient community of Israel, itself founded in a redemptive act, was a shadow and prophecy, whose near coming was the burden of the Baptist's message, whose nature was the theme of so much of Jesus' teaching.

It is, fundamentally, a new relationship between God and man, according to which they are organically one in full moral accord and deep vital union; and this involves also a new relationship between man and man, in which they are in fullest sense members of one organism, and, therefore, of one another.

In times of doubt and fear, when evil seems victorious, fresh hope arises when we realise that the moral goal of the race is not a dream, which might be disappointed, but a fact already established, in the might of which, and towards the full vindication of which we labour. The Kingdom has come. There exists that moral organism which has been defined by Dr Candlish as "the gathering together of men under God's eternal law of righteous love, by the vital power of his redeeming love in Jesus Christ, brought to bear upon them through the Holy Spirit" (Cunningham lecture on "The Kingdom of God," p. 197). Moral life for man

begins when he becomes through faith in Christ a member of this organism, a citizen and heir of the Kingdom.

3. RESULTANT FEATURES OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.—From the point of view of the work of Christ, finished in dying, issuing in the Kingdom, we discern three great characteristic features of Christian character. (*a.*) The basis of its possibility. Guilt makes union to God impossible; without that union life and life's product, character, are impossible. Guilt is atoned for. Christ, our Substitute, has borne that load. It no longer stands between us and God, hemming us into our isolation, affecting us with moral paralysis. We believe in the forgiveness of sins, and from that moment hope arises. Christ is the conscience of the race. To this truth, which of itself has in it more of despair than promise, we add that He is its hope. His goodness does not condemn, because since He has borne our sins, there is now for us no condemnation; and His goodness is not beyond us, as a new and more terrible revelation of our evil, but within us, at once our deepest aspiration, and the inspiration and energy of our moral regeneration. (*b.*) Its ruling principle. Trace Christian character to its source, and we find it roots itself in the deed of Christ for our redemption. Realise how it comes to pass that we are not now aliens, but included in the Kingdom, with the goal of Christ-likeness shining before us, and we find it is because Christ, in unspeakable love for us, identified Himself with us, and endured the uttermost of sin's penalty, instead of us. Reduce our moral

condition to its simplest terms, and we find we cannot put it more accurately or comprehensively than in these words, "bought with a price," with their strict correlative, "ye are not your own." Our whole redeemed life lies in deep subjection to the claim of Christ. Christian character accordingly gains unity and simplicity, and with these strength and certainty, through this dominant principle of recognition of Christ's Sovereignty. We have but one thing to do, viz., to vindicate Christ's Sovereignty throughout the whole domain of our nature and constitution, and in every department of life. The character God meant us to have was destroyed by the revolt of Self. Christian character is reconstituted by the surrender of Self, and the sanctifying of Christ as Lord in heart and life; 1 Peter iii. 15; R.V. (*c.*) Its inspiring motive. Christian character is produced by a deed of love. Its deepest consciousness, its ceaseless inspiration, is, therefore, answering love; 1 John iv. 10. Through the uprising of this wellspring of action Christian character gains ease, swiftness, and gladness. A character modelled on Law is painful, laborious, slow. Christian character acts with the precision and freedom of an instinct. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Love works by a sweet inevitableness. It is "dutiful in thought and deed," and love, says Browning, is "energy of life." Christian character is the harmony of God's universe, and its keynote is this, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." Love in man evoked by and answering to Love in God is the law of life for man. Against it there is no law.

CHAPTER II.

THE DISCIPLINE OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

WE have attained, therefore, this result that Christ is the source of Christian character. Its specific nature is derived from Him; and its existence as a reality of moral experience stands in Him. We have now to observe that, by necessary consequence, Christian character can manifest itself in any individual human being only through personal relation to Christ. In making this statement, we ought to be careful lest we unduly narrow the scope of God's grace. We ought to admit that there may be a relation to Christ, which is, so to speak, subconscious, and may exist even in those who have never been brought into connection with the Christ of history, so that in them aspects of distinctively Christian character may be found, though they are ignorant of distinctively Christian doctrine. Yet such cases, whether many or few, cannot be made the subject of scientific investigation, and form no real exception to the statement made above.

It is common for young men or women to be greatly attracted to persons, who are certainly not Christians, who yet possess qualities of mind or heart greatly superior to those of other persons who profess to be Christians. Hence the inference is often carelessly drawn that it does not matter whether there be any personal relation to Christ, that character is enough, and that character may exist apart from Him. The answer lies, first, in

those general considerations we have already adduced, proving that Christian character, as a distinct type, can exist only as it is rooted in Christ; second, in pointing out that judgment upon individual instances is always precarious. The unbeliever may not be after all so admirable; the professed believer may not be so unworthy. Only prolonged observation will shew. Meantime, it may be prophesied that what is excellent in the unbeliever, being in deepest affinity with Christ, will ultimately lead him to Christ; and that what is unworthy in the Christian will be gradually purged out of him. If the unbeliever remain impervious to the influence of Christ, it will shew that he is not admirable in the highest sense. If the Christian do not morally improve, it will show that his profession has been vain. Practically, therefore, the assertion remains universally true that personal relation to Christ is necessary for the development in the individual of that highest type of moral excellence, the Christian character. It is plain that this sets the claim of Christ in a high and lovely light. To those who have worthy ambitions, who desire to live nobly, it may be said, "Only as you accept Christ as Teacher, Ideal, and Redeemer, will your ambition be satisfied, and your life be great and good."

A. THE NEW LIFE BEGUN.—It belongs to Christian doctrine rather than to Christian ethics to study the experience by which the human spirit becomes knit to Christ. Yet we cannot wholly pass it by, though we can only notice its leading features.

1. THE POWER.—The doctrine of man's total

inability through the Fall is often so stated as to be repellent, even misleading. There can be no doubt, however that it represents ethical fact. Sin is the determination of the will, that is, of the man, by Self in opposition to the will of God. It belongs, therefore, to the nature of the case that a power other than that of Self is wanted to "persuade and enable" the man to turn and yield to God. Only God can operate effectively on the spirit of man; and this He does by His own Holy Spirit (John i. 12; Tit. iii. 5). At the moral crises of life only two persons exist, God and the Man. It is unspeakably solemn, and no stranger dare intermeddle. It behoves even persons officially concerned as pastors, or those profoundly interested through human affection, as parents, to be well aware that the only power which can operate is that of the Holy Spirit, and to be on their guard accordingly lest they hinder where they meant to help.

2. THE METHOD.—Probably no wiser statement of the Spirit's dealing with a soul has ever been penned than the answer to the question on "Effectual Calling" in our Shorter Catechism. "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel." This, with its leading proof passages (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; John vi. 44; Phil. ii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 9), forms one of the most perfect specimens of practical theology which exist in literature. At the same time it will be misusing it if we attempt to force all

experience through the precise stages here laid down ; and it will be serious error if we question the validity of an experience in which they are not clearly marked. Fundamentally the movement of the human spirit Godward is in two parallel lines, increasing sense of man's need, increasing perception of God's grace. When these two come to their appropriate issue, the soul has found Christ, or been found of Him. How the Spirit deepens the sense of need, and illuminates the soul with the sufficiency of Christ, varies from case to case, and belongs to the secret which binds God and His child together. Conversion takes place when there dawns upon the heart that double discovery, to which one of our hymns (No. 279) gives simple and pathetic expression :

"O, Saviour, I have nought to plead,
In earth beneath, or heaven above,
But just my own exceeding need,
And thy exceeding love."

3. THE ACT.—At no point in man's relation to God is he merely passive. As he is a responsible agent, there is always an act of his, strength for which God ceaselessly supplies by His Spirit required for securing the result. No man is ever brought into personal relation to Christ save through an act of his own will. This act is Faith. In the nature of the case no definition of faith can ever be complete. In it the whole personality of man is engaged, and by it the whole personal life is profoundly affected. Christ and the man are face to face. The man under constraint of the Spirit of God, yet acting on his own responsibility, abandons

his position of alienation from God, and passes over to Christ. Such an act is too marvellous, summing up as it does all the man's past, inaugurating and determining all his future, to be compressed into a formula. It includes trust, the *fiducia* of the Reformers, the burden of all evangelical appeal; repentance, which is the same act as faith, looked at from the *terminus a quo* rather than the *terminus ad quem;* decision, appearing under this aspect in some of the most remarkable of the Biblical biographies, *e.g.*, Moses, Ruth, Mary, and, in sadder sense, Lot, and the rich young Ruler; appropriation (Rom. xiii. 14) and consecration (Acts xxvii. 23), which are the keynotes of that movement associated with the convention at Keswick and the writings of Andrew Murray, which has done much to quicken the life of the Church in recent days. However defined or described, Faith issues in two facts of spiritual experience. The first is Justification (Gal. ii. 16, and frequently in Paul's Epistles), relief from condemnation, and possession of righteousness. The second is Life in Christ (Gal. ii. 20, and everywhere in Paul and John), personal vital union to Christ, of whose closeness and intimacy things are said in Scripture which move us to wonder and praise. He who was once, in evil sense, Self-determined is now Christ-determined; once an alien, now he is a citizen of the Kingdom, its servant and heir. From the point of view of religion, he is saved, or, more correctly and scripturally, he is in process of being saved, his salvation drawing nearer by every day he lives since he believed (Rom. xiii. 11). From the point of view

of Christian ethic, Christian character has begun to be formed in him.

B. THE TRAINING OF THE NEW LIFE: GOD'S MEANS.—From this too brief consideration of the sacred experience, commonly known as "conversion," a term worn sadly threadbare, one great feature emerges, viz., that it is a beginning, that certainly, but that only. Without a beginning, no progress, is a commonplace. With a beginning merely, no arrival, is also a commonplace, yet practically often forgotten.

That experience in which personal relationship is established between Christ and the man, most blessed and glorious as it undoubtedly is, is not the terminus. The salvation to which it introduces the believer has but begun. Its consummation is yet to come (Rom. xiii. 11). The interval between the time when we believe and the time when salvation is complete is occupied not merely in the maintenance of a certain standing, but also in an actual history, the growth and development of character, the maturing of faculty and ripening of experience, the increase of service. God does not take the soul He saves and lay it, as the keeper of a museum might do a fossil, in some safe place. He saves it with a view to preparing it for use. He never ceases His operation upon it, but takes daily pains with it, till He have fashioned it for Himself. What means God uses for the discipline of character in any one individual it is not possible to state. No biography, however complete, no autobiography, however honest, could render it in full. There is an individuality and distinctiveness in God's dealings

with each human being which defies analysis, and makes at once the sacredness and the interest of spiritual life. All men are subjected, however, to three grand modes of discipline, to which reference must be made.

1. TEMPTATION.—"God cannot be tempted with evil, and He tempteth no one;" James i. 13. We are tempted by evil. What evil is in essence and origin is for theology to discuss. The practical consequences are much the same, even if we deny a personal source of evil, though probably a growing experience of life will incline even the most sceptical to revise their early incredulity, and incline to the conviction that the phenomena of temptation are explicable only on the supposition of a Satanic agency. Temptation to evil, therefore, does not come from God. At the same time, temptation is used by God as an instrument in His hand, and wholly under His control, for the discipline of Christian character. This is the presupposition of all experience of temptation in Christian life. It is not a thing foreign to Christian experience arising from fate or chance. It belongs to the divine discipline that is shaping our lives. This at once delivers us from despair. Temptation is in God's hand. It will not exceed the severity He sees needful. It will never make sin inevitable. Always there will be a way of escape which the eye of a trained and observant faith will see; 1 Cor. x. 13.

From this point of view let us consider certain outstanding features of this discipline. (*a.*) *Its possibility* as an element of Christian experience. If a man be truly regenerate, it may be asked, how can

he be subjected to the pressure of evil? Here let us grasp two clear facts. First, Sin is a broken power. We are not under its dominion; Rom. vi. 14. The wonderful 6th chapter of Romans rings out this note of victory. Second, it is never necessary to yield to temptation. If it were necessary, such yielding would not be sin. We cannot exaggerate the Christian privilege in this aspect of it; where it has been forgotten we need to be reminded of it. When we have placed our privilege, however, as high as the Bible permits, we have not yet got beyond the reach of temptation, and never shall get, so long as we remain in this world.

Consider the position of the Christian. It is true he has now entered the Kingdom of God. God's will has been accepted by him as the supreme regulative principle of his life. It is true that he has admitted Christ into the centre of his being, and that his life is rooted in Christ. But this does not mean that from the whole domain of his being, character, and life, evil has been wholly expelled so as to be no longer a malign influence upon him. Still less does it mean that he can no longer feel the pressure of peril from the world in which he lives, with which he comes into such manifold contact, and by which he is influenced in so many ways. Rather the fact of his being a subject of the Kingdom of God, and of having Christ as the centre of his life, makes the pressure of evil the more intense. Sin, violently extruded from the centre of his spiritual nature, returns upon him in great and terrible reaction. So far from its being true that a Christian as such ought not to feel the pressure of evil, the fact

is that only the Christian can feel it in its intensity. The 7th chapter of the Romans, following upon the 6th, brings out this phase of Christian experience, which many a soul, sore beset, has read as its own. The point at issue is, Shall the Self, once yielded to Christ, be subjected again to the dominion of sin. To produce this result the forces of evil are marshalled with a malignity, force, and subtlety, that suggest, if they do not prove, Satanic agency. To test and confirm the reality of the acceptance of Christ, temptation is ordained, used, and measured by God.

(*b.*) *Its Forms.*—These, of course, are infinitely varied, and defy enumeration. Yet we can distinguish certain directions towards which the forces of evil would conduct us. *First.*—To the commission of old sins. Our characters have been weakened by certain sins in time past. Certain habits have been formed. Certain tendencies have been developed. Now, therefore, when we would fain go and sin no more, it is along the line of these old sins that the forces of evil run with most virulent power, and assail us with even greater vehemence than formerly. Allow evil its free course, and it deals with us almost gently. Resist it, and it rages against us with demoniac fury. Intemperance, lustfulness, profanity, bad temper, are conspicuous examples of this. Probably no Christian would ever seriously conclude to tolerate such giant evils. It is otherwise with less conspicuous faults. Many of us find the task of coping with them irksome, and so allow them to remain. Thus sin re-establishes itself, and the character, which should have been a harmonious whole

is disorganised, distorted, and enfeebled. *Second.*—To the neglect of revealed duty. The experience of a Christian is meant to be a progressive discovery and an ever-increasing fulfilment of duty. Every revelation of duty, however, is attended, as its shadow, by the opposing power of evil. Between the man and his obedience stands the evil, which is simply the sin of his past, seeking, partly by seduction and partly by threatening, to dissuade him from its performance. The struggle lies between the right, with which the man is identified, and which he is bound to achieve, and the evil with which he was once identified, and which now seeks again to bring him into bondage. Examples of this occur in the moral history of every day, as we rise toward the good and beautiful, which dawns ever more perfectly on our vision. If for any pain or trouble we decline the upward step, we pay the penalty of having the vision itself withdrawn, of being deprived of its inspiration, and being left to the lower level we have preferred. Character which ought to be progressive becomes stationary ; and in morals to be stationary is to retrograde. We cannot decline the highest, when we see it, without losing, not only it, but the moral position at which we stood when we made the refusal. The great and dramatic instances of this temptation occur in times of persecution. The evil arises, incarnated in the inquisitor, to bar the progress of the soul toward the light. The history of such times illustrates the moral situation, both by noble instances of constancy, and by the sorrowful cases of lapsing, and the consequent deterioration of character on the part of those who

yield. *Third.*—To the denial of the Faith. The reaction of evil reaches here its intensest force. Christian character is constituted by faith in Christ. Precisely at this point, therefore, does temptation most fiercely assail the Christian. As we have pointed out of Temptation, in general, so let us now insist with regard to this phase of it, that it is discipline, ordered and restrained by God. Doubt is not sin. There is, of course, a flippant doubt born of conceit, and a dishonest doubt, which is a mere device to excuse sin. But doubt may be, and often is, the bitter experience of genuine Christian life. Christ is the centre of life and character. If, therefore, the soul can be detached from Christ, evil will have triumphed. It is not the feeblest hold of Christ that is subjected to this strain. Rather is it the strongest, which thus provokes recoil towards unbelief. The great Biblical example is Job, whom doubt pursued to the very citadel of his faith. He was confronted by the terrible possibility of antagonism between God and his conscience. Into this all doubt ultimately concentrates. To have the highest instincts set in opposition to what we have heard of God is torture unutterable, for, if antagonism were really proved, it would mean the destruction of the moral universe, utter spiritual anarchy. To such discipline often the finest souls are subjected. It is a time most critical, requiring utmost patience, on the part of all friends and counsellors, and specially on the part of those thus tempted. The issue depends on the hearing of the ear being replaced by the seeing of the eye, Job xlii. 5, 6. The conclusion may not

be the removal of speculative difficulties, but it will be the revelation of a spiritual relationship, to whose unfoldings the speculative solutions may be safely entrusted.

(*c.*) *Methods by which it is to be met.* The assault of evil requires three lines of action on the part of the assailed. *First.*—The presence of evil must be detected. The requirement here is self-knowledge, 1 Cor. ix. 26. The whole field of character must be minutely, carefully, and constantly kept under observation. Evil has already won the victory, if it can escape observation and intrench itself in some unnoticed weakness, some unconsidered trespass or neglect. Most wisely, therefore, must we fight, learning by dint of self-examination where evil is likely to assail us, at what points our character needs strengthening, and so concentrating our efforts towards the conquest of definite evils, and the attainment of special excellencies.

Second.—Occasions of evil must be avoided. Our duty here is careful avoidance of situations or circumstances, into which the call of God does not lead, where we know evil influences will be brought to bear against us. We are to watch, to survey the territory ahead through which we proposed to move. Inasmuch also as our foresight is limited and our ignorance great, to the exercise of watching must be added that of praying, lest, being left to ourselves, we should walk into an ambush, Matt. xxvi. 41.

It may even become our duty, by violent and painful effort, to cast away from us things not necessarily evil in themselves, which, however, so

operate on inherent tendencies in our own nature, as to become occasions of inevitable fall. The attainment of character is so high an aim, that no sacrifice of anything merely pleasurable is too great to make for it, Matt. v. 29, 30; Mark ix. 43-48. Our natural instinct is to deal very tenderly with sins that are pleasant, and to find many reasons for indulging ourselves in them. But, if the character whose source is Christ, is to grow up into His likeness, we must learn to be absolutely relentless, and to treat ourselves with the utmost rigour. Our Lord's words in the above passages are startling, as they cleave through all delusions and reveal the breadth and depth of the alternative. The Christianity of Christ is never easy.

Third.—The forces of evil must be resisted. By such means the actual conflict may often be avoided. Frequently, however, in spite of watchfulness and the utmost care, the forces of evil close with us, and put our spiritual being under severe strain.

Three points have to be attended to. *First*, small temptations have to be dealt with as seriously as great ones. By every temptation yielded to, the force of evil is increased, and our power of resistance decreased. It is of utmost importance that no known evil be permitted to obtain permanent footing within the domain which should be wholly under the sovereignty of Christ. Christian character cannot be established in one or two brilliant feats, but must be secured by a long series of obscure and unnoticed victories. *Second*, the combatant who strikes the first blow gains profound moral advan-

tage. It is essential to the completeness of the victory that evil be resisted as soon as perceived. As in the old story of the Fall, argument is fatal. There is nothing to be done with sin save to resist it, and sin resisted is sin overcome (James iv. 7). *Third*, let no mistake be made as to the condition of victory. Morality cannot be separated from religion. It is a grave tactical blunder to attempt to fight the enemy in our own strength. Character can only be formed as the life we have in Christ is allowed to pervade our being and give us the strength required. "Remember," says a wise spiritual guide, "that it is not you who are to conquer, but He who is to conquer in you." (No wiser or more beautiful writing in Christian ethics is to be found than in the chapters on temptation in Goulburn's "Thoughts on Personal Religion.") That this strength can be had, and that it is sufficient, is as much matter of experience as the existence and efficiency of any force in the physical universe (1 John v. 4; 2 Cor. ii. 14; Ephes. vi. 16).

It is plain that temptation thus met and resisted becomes in God's hands a valuable means in the discipline of character. By temptation we are trained to detect sin when it appears, whatever its disguise, and to hate it for its moral vileness and its disastrous consequences. By temptation we obtain needed exercise for our moral powers, which are thus strengthened not merely for resistance of evil, but for attainment of good. By temptation we are led to more practical realisation of the resources we have in Christ. As the wind-blast helps to root the tree deeper in the soil, so temptation causes us

to send the roots of character deeper into Christ. Without temptation character would be sapless, pithless, always immature and ineffective. We find the strain severe. Let us rejoice, since this is evidence of moral gain.

> "Was the trial sore?
> Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!
> Why comes temptation but for man to meet
> And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
> And so be pedestalled in triumph."
>
> BROWNING—*Ring and the Book*; The Pope.

2. SUFFERING.—The mystery of pain must always remain dark to the human intellect. When we survey the pain of nature as it waits for the manifestation of the sons of God, as we read the page of history dark with tragedies of crime and agony, as we open the daily newspaper and hear the cry of a nation weltering in blood, we feel we are in presence of a problem for which neither reason nor revelation provides a complete solution. The only clue we possess is the teaching of scripture that pain, even in nature, connects itself with sin in man; that, therefore, redemption contains within itself the promise of deliverance, not for man only, but for the realm of which he is head. It is different, however, when we turn to the discipline of character. Here we are at no loss to discern in suffering one of the means whereby God prepares a soul for the highest moral attainment; and here also we find a ray of light shining into the darkness of the larger problem. For if pain play so noble a part in the education and development of the individual, can

we not conceive, dimly at least, how it should serve in the career of the wider organism, which includes all men and all created things, the same lofty end? Pain is no evil to the individual. Why should it be mere evil in the experience of humanity and the world at large? Confining our attention now to suffering as an element in the discipline of character, we observe the following points. (*a.*) *The Forms of Suffering.—First.*—Chastening (Heb. xii. 11; Rev. iii. 19). Here the occasion of infliction of pain is some sin in the sufferer. This does not necessarily imply that the pain follows punctually on the offence, or corresponds in outward form with the offence. We are not, therefore, in every case to suppose that we can trace the connection. But we are able, from our general knowledge of ourselves, to say, whether we have been allowing ourselves in some trespass or neglect, which has rendered chastening a necessary course of dealing with us on the part of One who has the interests of our character at heart. If this chastening involve others in grief or pain, as it frequently will, the discovery it makes of our own sin is the more keen and terrible.

Second.—Trial (John ix. 3). Sufferings have not always their explanation in some special sin. To suppose that every sorrow we endure has its root in some sin we have committed is to do dishonour to God, and to miss the point of His discipline. Growth is more than the mere checking of one sin after another. Suffering, therefore, has a nobler end than merely to check off each sin as it is committed. What suffering is chastisement, and what is trial, cannot be determined by us in

reference to any sufferer. Even with respect to ourselves, we cannot always fix definitely. God's means of discipline are inarticulate. We need to give earnest heed, until the meaning disengage itself from the circumstances and fill our mind with its lessons. *Third.*—Suffering for righteousness' sake (Matt. v. 10-12 ; x. 39). Suffering of this description is inevitable for us, living in the sphere we occupy, where evil, though defeated, rages. What Christ did in supreme sense, encounter the evil of the world, and defeat it in the very moment when it broke upon Him, the Christian has to do in so far as he follows Christ. Care has to be taken here that we should discern the Figure of Christ as He goes before us, and not lose Him in the mist of our own fancies. Many have followed, even to the stake, a mere wraith, the shadow of their own pride and superstition. Many daily pride themselves on faithfulness, when the source of their suffering is mere conceit and ignorance. Be not martyrs by mistake. The only guide is the Spirit of God, given to those who live near to God. Whenever in that light we see Christ, we must range ourselves beside Him and confess Him before men. Life thus becomes a daily martyrdom, from which, even in most commonplace surroundings, the dignity of pain is not often awanting.

(*b.*) *The Functions of Suffering.*—There is no aspect of character which is not refined and elevated by suffering, no Christian virtue which does not derive from suffering the greater part of its power and beauty. A complete description of the work accomplished by suffering is therefore impossible.

The following points lie on the surface. *First.*—It acts as antidote and prophylactic in reference to Sin. Physical pain is the main preservative of physical life, our chief means of knowing what hurts us, and of guiding us to the avoidance of danger. In full analogy with this, the law that connects pain with sin sets us on our guard, and directs us in a careful avoidance of sources of moral evil. Make your fears your safeguard, is advice nobler and wiser than at first glance appears. *Second.*—It tests and purifies the character; 1 Peter i. 6, 7. It acts as fire, sifting out loose elements from the life, and strengthening and confirming all that has its roots in Christ, and has affinities with His perfect nature. Without this discipline, character would be unstable, and growth uncertain. *Third.*—It prepares and fits for service. This it did even for Christ; Heb. ii. 10; v. 8; ii. 18; iv. 15. Much more in our case. It does so by reducing the vigour of selfish ambitions, by separating us from circumstances which would divert us from the true end of life, and by uniting us in sympathy to our fellow-men. No education is comparable to that of pain. The world loses its glamour. Men draw us out of self by the attraction of their need. The worker is endowed with a new faculty to discern the need and meet it with ready helpfulness. *Fourth.*—It enters as corrective into lofty privilege, and prevents rare experiences from becoming sources of temptation; 2 Cor. xii. 7. A thorn in the flesh, however much it may be a messenger of Satan, is in truth a divinely appointed agency in keeping the soul humble and

near the Cross. *Fifth.*—It forms the condition of entrance into the fellowship of Christ, and thus into possession of spiritual power; Rom. viii. 17; Phil. iii. 10; 1 Peter iv. 13. Here we touch on the depths of the mystery of our relation to Christ. Christ's suffering is vicarious, and as such it was the crowning revelation of God. His sufferings are continued in the persons of His people; Col. i. 24. In them, they serve the same end, being a continued proof and illustration to the world of the love of God in Christ. At the same time those who thus suffer are being brought near to God, are entering into sympathy with the divine purpose of mercy, and are drawing from the divine fulness the grace of life. Without suffering we could know neither God nor Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

It is plain, therefore, that suffering is in itself most precious, serving ends unattainable without it.

(*c.*) *The Acceptance of Suffering.*—Suffering is accordingly, a divine appointment in our lives. It is, as has been well said, a vocation, the highest of all vocations, and is wrongly estimated, when it is received with irritation or anger, as an interference with our vocations. This conception of suffering as an element in the divine plan of life for the Christian lies deep in the New Testament. The first Epistle of Peter is full of it, *e.g.*, ii. 21. It is perhaps not altogether fanciful to regard the predominance of this thought in his Epistle as connected with his Master's express charge to him, John xxi. 18, 19: "When He had spoken this," viz.,

the prediction of a painful death, "He saith unto him, Follow Me." This Apostle gloried in action, but the divine plan designated him to glorify God chiefly in suffering.

The whole doctrine of suffering is condensed in our Lord's saying, Luke ix. 23, and parallels. Here it is distinctly announced as a necessary element in all discipleship. The Cross is to be taken, to be embraced in an act of will. Only as thus freely undertaken will suffering discharge its varied functions in the discipline of character. Resisted, struggled against, with attempts to evade it, and a rebellious spirit under its imposition, it becomes, like all rejected gifts of God, an element in the hardening of the heart, and the deterioration of character. There is nothing more pitiful than pain rendered fruitless by the revolt of the will.

A review of life ought to show us something at least of the place and value of suffering, should lead us to suspect a plan of life from which pain, disappointment, and sorrow are eliminated, and should warn us not to attempt to construct such a scheme of life for ourselves. We should

> "Welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough;
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
> Be our joys three parts pain,
> Strive and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn nor account the pang; dare never grudge the throe."
>
> —BROWNING, *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

Such a conception of the value of suffering and of the welcome we should accord it depends for its reasonableness and its profitableness on the Christ-

ian view of life. Our acceptance of suffering, therefore, must always be religious in its action.

It is to be accompanied by three activities of soul, each directed Godward—First, submission (1 Peter v. 6); Second, patience (James v. 10, 11); Third, trust (Rom. viii. 28). These are the spiritual conditions of profit in suffering, and not of profit only, but of comfort. We here rise above the merely moral point of view. God is not merely an operator, working up material into a certain form. He is the Father. Thus with suffering He gives comfort, which, when the suffering is duly accepted, flows unstinted into the weary heart, taking away all repining, bitterness, or despair, replacing these with peace and joy (2 Cor. i. 4, 5; Rom. v. 3).

3. WORK: RESULTS FOR CHARACTER.—It is important to notice the function of work in the discipline of character. It is usual to quote Genesis iii. 17-19 as a curse. It might, with equal appropriateness, be studied as a blessing. Work as such belongs both to the sinless and the sinful stage of human history. In the sinful stage it no doubt is accompanied by peculiar hardships, but these find their explanation in the revolt of man's will, and the consequent disorder of his character. Work, however hard and difficult, is a necessary element in the education of man, and as such is an appointment of wisdom and mercy. Like suffering, work influences the growth of character in ways too numerous and subtle to admit of enumeration. Observe, however, how work corrects certain outstanding defects, and superinduces the corresponding excellency.

(*a.*) *Humility.* — Man's first attitude towards nature is an arrogant demand that it shall yield him satisfaction. Labour teaches him another lesson. In order to successful work he must humble himself to be a pupil in Nature's school, must lay aside the presumptions of his ignorance, observe the laws of the material with which he works. He can only work as he yields himself to these laws, and by work he is brought into harmony with them. These laws, moreover, take him beyond themselves into a realm of law, of which he is, and ought to be, the subject. To be part of an infinite whole, to be an intelligent citizen in an ordered universe, to be a willing agent in its great design, is the highest dignity of man ; and this dignity work enables him to attain.

(*b.*) *Perseverance.* The deepest instinct of sinful man is sheer unmitigated laziness. The savage, who makes his wife work for him, and is in some races so idle that he makes his wife feed him, is the typical natural man. His demand is that things shall be his without labour. The primitive laziness is seen in the gambling mania, whether on the turf or the stock exchange. This ruling idea is to acquire possessions without labour. The necessity of labour reveals a higher truth. No possessions, whether material, intellectual, or spiritual are so truly ours, or so readily satisfy us, as those for which we have toiled, in which we have invested our personal powers of body, mind, and spirit. When we enter on such possessions, we are gaining an enlarged and ennobled nature. It is matter of common observation that possessions acquired without labour

deteriorate the character. True wealth can be gained and maintained only by work. Even in case of inherited wealth a man can only serve himself its heir by using it as an instrument in work. Without work, it will be an inheritance of curse. The miseries of the "idle rich" have passed into a proverb.

(*c.*) *Concentration.* Only less natural and less culpable than idleness is unregulated activity. Energy is spent now in one direction now in another; and no greater permanent result is achieved. Along with this dissipation of energy goes disintegration of character. There can be no moral growth where there is no unity of effort. Only by limiting the exercise of power can either physical or moral development be successfully carried on. The restraints of the position in which we find ourselves, the exigencies of labour which absorb so much time and attention, form needed and valuable moral discipline.

(*d.*) *Sympathy.* The concentration required by work would become an occasion of sin in making the workman selfish and blind to the interests of others, did not work itself supply the antidote. He cannot do his own piece of work, without keeping in view the labour of some other man, whose work is needed to complete his. He is thus taught the deep moral lesson that no man can live unto himself, that if he attempt it he must die. In work, a man is an instrument in a wider good than his own. His own good, in fact, is the wider good. The selfishness which sets man against man, trade against trade, men against masters, is not only a

crime, but a blunder, and entails endless loss to those who make selfish gain the sole end of labour.

(*e.*) *Increased capacity.* The richest gain of work is skill. That a man should live or grow rich by labour is a by-product. The real advantage lies in the increase of faculty, fitting the workman for finer and more perfect workmanship. All good work is done by the workman's losing sight of ulterior ends, and making the perfection of the work his sole ruling purpose. When he is finished the result is good, and he himself is ready for something higher. This moral lesson of work extends to life as a whole. We are here, not to acquire possessions other than this, higher power for higher work hereafter. This, and no more than this, God gives us :

> " Here work enough to watch
> " The Master work, and catch
> " Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play."
>
> BROWNING, *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

We understand, therefore, the conditions under which work can discharge for us these functions. It must be accepted in whatever form it comes to us, and discharged with equal fidelity whatever its apparent magnitude. This condition is laid down in the two parables of the Talents, Matt. xxv. 16-30, and the Pounds, Luke xix. 12-27, which with so much in common have a distinct point in each. In the Talents, the endowment of the workmen is different in each case, the fidelity is the same, and the reward is the same. In the Pounds, the endowment is the same in each case, the fidelity differs, and the reward differs in proportion to the fidelity. In both parables the reward consists in ampler

opportunity of service. There is no higher morality than absolute fidelity to our station and its duties, There is no higher moral attainment than that of being "a good and faithful servant." By work, God fits us to His hand.

Looking back over this sketch of the discipline of character, we cannot miss the practical issue. God takes us in hand. We are the clay, He the potter. But we must not use this analogy to blind us to a fundamental truth. We are personal beings, and God deals with us as persons. Not even to bless us will He derogate aught from our dignity as men. We are never mere clay, or mere machines. We stand free before God, either to accept or reject His discipline.

> "God, whose pleasure brought
> Man into being, stands away
> As it were a hand-breadth off, to give
> Room for the newly-made to live,
> And look at him from a place apart,
> . . . . . .
> whose plan
> Was to create man and then leave him
> Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,
> But able to glorify Him too
> As a mere machine could never do."
>
> BROWNING, *Christmas Eve.*

We are called on, therefore, to place ourselves freely in His hand, that He may have His way with us, and make of us what He would. This act implies three elements. First, Surrender, Rom. vi. 13; second, Intelligent recognition of the end in view, and entire consecration to it, Phil. iii. 14; third, Trust, that infinite love and wisdom devised the

discipline, ordained its forms, and will preserve the subject of it safe till the end be reached, 2 Tim. i. 12. May teacher and class together be strengthened with might by the Spirit to perform this glad and solemn act of dedication, and offer the poet's prayer :—

"But I need, now as then
Thee, God, who mouldest men!
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I, to the wheel of life,
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily, mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

"So take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim,
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!"

BROWNING, *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

(For exposition of Browning's conception of life I know nothing better than "Sermons from Browning," by Rev. F. Ealand, M.A. London: Elliot Stock. A small but most helpful book.)

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CHAPTER III.

THE CULTURE OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

WE have hitherto been looking at Christian character from the point of view of the divine source in which it originated, and the divine guidance by which it is developed. We are now to consider it from the point of view of the individual in whom it appears, of whose personal being it is the expression. We can never neglect, as we

can never logically comprehend, the double aspect, divine and human, in the personal life of man. Character in one aspect is made by God ; in another it is self-made. Neglect the former and we become mere moralists. Neglect the latter and we become unethical mystics, or antinomian fanatics. The divine and the human can never be brought together in a formula. But in studying the one we ought never to forget the other, and in actual life the two must appear in the practical unity of character. If, therefore, in what has now to be said we speak mainly of our responsibilities in respect to the making of character, let us take with us, as abiding presupposition, all that we have learnt of God's power and discipline, in producing the result of ripe Christian character.

In this chapter we take the leading departments of our constitution as men, and endeavour to see how each of them enters into our moral life, and how, through our behaviour in respect to them, our character is built up.

A. THE BODY.—1. ITS IMPORTANCE FOR CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.—Man is not pure spirit. The abstract separation of spiritual and material, with the consequent contempt of the material, was the rock upon which Greek Philosophy split. When applied practically this wide distinction has been fraught with disastrous consequences. If the body be absolutely distinct from the soul, two ways of treating it are open. Either it may be viewed as the enemy of man's true life, and maltreated accordingly, or it may be looked upon as wholly indifferent to the moral life, and indulged in all its lusts and

passions. Both these extremes have been actually practised, even in the history of the Christian Church. Both arise from the presupposition, for which there is no support in Scripture or in reason, that Man is spiritual only, and that his body is something lying outside the domain of his spiritual life. We sometimes speak of the body as the vesture of the soul, by which it makes itself manifest, or as the instrument of the soul, by which it carries out its purposes; but we must be careful not to imagine that the body is to the soul as clothing is to the body or a tool to the hand. We may lay aside our clothing or set down our tools, and yet remain ourselves, intact. We cannot so treat our bodies. They are part of ourselves. We cannot part with them and remain complete personalities. Christianity does not recognise man as a Ghost or Shade. Its doctrine of immortality must be taken in immediate connection with its doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The body is instinct with the soul. The soul is incarnate in the body. Health is commonly defined as *mens sana in corpore sano*. Holiness might be defined in the same way as a state of complete manhood, in which the whole man, body included, is wholly transformed, and raised to the design of his creation. To suppose that Paul's contribution to theology is the conception of a resurrection of Christ so spiritual in character that the historic event in Joseph's garden may be left an open question, is entirely to misconceive him. He is not a Greek philosopher. He is working out the revelation of redemption, and is teaching that that redemption

includes the body. If it does not, it has failed. The famous 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians is not a philosophic disquisition on the immortality of the soul. It is an application of redemption to the body. The body, accordingly, is not an outlying territory which might be neglected, if only the kingdom be established in the soul. Nor is it itself an enemy which has to be crushed, before the kingdom can be secure. It comes within the domain of the kingdom. It has to be occupied by the King. Its powers have to be dedicated to His service, and trained for His perfect use. Let not the special point of Rom. xii. 1 be forgotten. It is often rendered, "present *ourselves* as living sacrifices"; but what Paul says, and means, is "present *our bodies*." This actual flesh and blood body is to be a sacrifice, living, not dead, in the fulness of its function, laid upon the Altar. It is plain, therefore, that the culture of Christian character cannot proceed without careful study of the body, and a most earnest watchfulness in all the relations of life into which it enters.

2. BODILY SINS.—Sin is, no doubt, an act of the man, of his self-determining will. Sin resides there, in the seat of the man's responsibility. But the various sides of his nature may in turn provide the suggestion of evil, and the field for its operation. It is open to the man to turn any part of his being against the divine end which should govern the whole complex constitution.

The body, therefore, is not itself sinful, and is not to be hated or abused as though it were. It is not, as General Gordon with his strong mystical bias

was wont to say, "the life long foe" of the soul. Every affection, instinct, passion, of the body, is in itself pure and good, but any one of them provides scope and opportunity for man, in his self-will and disobedience, to break the divine law of his being. The specialty of the body, in this respect, is that the cravings of the flesh are keener than those of other aspects of our nature, and the pleasures connected with their satisfaction of a more instant and obvious kind. Hence temptations to sin in the body have an impetuosity and brute force, most overwhelming to the untried soul. It is to be observed also that bodily habits tend to obtain a fixity and mastery of a special, and often very terrible, kind. There is no more pitiable object in the world than the man who has suffered his will to be submerged beneath the imperious rule of a physical habit. Drunkenness will occur at once as the outstanding instance of this. Temptations to bodily sin occur with greatest frequency and force in youth, when the discipline of character has not yet brought the various elements of our nature into their ordained harmony; and in seasons, such as deep dejection or high excitement, when some powerful emotion has overshadowed the supremacy of the will. At all such times, there must be careful watching and prompt action to cope with the force of evil suggestion.

In the conquest of bodily sins the general principles referred to above in speaking of temptation (pp. 50-52) are applicable. To these may be added the following more specific directions :—(*a.*) *Clearly understand the penalty of bodily sin.*—All sin has

its appropriate penalty; but in the case of bodily sin the penalty is more obvious, is more dramatic in its exact correspondence to the very form of the offence, and follows more simply than in other breaches of law. Bodily sins are of the kind that go before men to judgment (1 Tim. v. 24). Abuse the body, make it the instrument of self-indulgence, and it becomes itself the instrument of our chastisement. There is a terror about the inevitableness with which suffering follows sin in the body which is more tremendous than any invective of the preacher. The solemn restraint, the absolute certainty of Galatians vi. 7, 8 is the most awful thing in literature. "One of the most short and telling sermons I ever heard," says Dr Wells,[a] "was by a friend who had charge of an hospital. Going round his wards with him one Sabbath morning we came to a young man whose secret sins had found him out. As the doctor laid bare his hideous sores—the sight was enough to sicken you—he said in a slow and solemn tone, 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' 'For'—still uncovering and dressing the running sores—'he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.' The poor man's face changed colour, his eyeballs grew larger, and I felt as if I had been present at the last judgment." Add to this the fact, amply established by science, that disease may be transmitted to posterity. In a popular treatise on medicine,[b] the following state-

a "Bible Echoes," p. 82.

b "The Household Physician," p. 6, by Dr J. Macgregor-Robertson. Blackie & Son.

ment occurs :—"A parent who may have inherited a robust enough constitution may himself acquire a disease, syphilis, for example, which he then hands down to his child; or by drunkenness or other excesses he may transmit a constitution, if not actually diseased, at least very prone to disease." The following example is also given :—"First generation — Immorality, depravity, alcoholic excess, and moral degradation in the great-grandfather, who was killed in a tavern brawl; second generation—Hereditary drunkenness, attacks of mania, ending in general paralysis in the grandfather; third generation—Sobriety, but tendencies to delusions, delusions of persecutions, &c., and tendencies to homicide in the father; fourth generation—Defective intelligence, first attack of mania at sixteen, stupidity, ending in complete idiocy." To be ourselves afflicted in body for our "pleasant vices" is bad. To hand on to generations yet unborn the consequences of our deeds in the body is a thought from which even the most hardened might recoil. Set this between us and bodily excess.

(*b.*) *Get a soul-subduing sight of the guilt and heinousness of bodily sin.—First.*—It dishonours God in His own image. By the fact of creation we are bound to do justice to the whole of our complex nature. Each element in it has its part to play in that glorifying of God which is the end of our being. It is our duty, therefore, to see that each element is competent to play this part, and is set free to do so. The body has its share in the glorifying of God. If we divert it from this end, and use it for self-gratification, if we so treat it that it becomes incapable of

rendering this service of praise, we are insulting its Maker in the grossest and most presumptuous way. *Second.*—It is theft of God's property. The general obligation of creation becomes intensified from the point of view of redemption. The broad fact is that we are "not our own" (1 Cor. vi. 19 ; Rom. xiv. 7, 8). We have no independent rights in any part of our being. Our bodies are not our own. To treat them as though they were, to make them instruments of our own selfish purposes, is theft of a peculiarly mean and disgraceful kind. We are content that God should get our souls, about the "salvation" of which we are occasionally anxious ; but our bodies we require for ourselves as the instrument of our pleasures ! We cannot so trifle with redemption. Its immediate inference is that Christ is Lord of all. To confess Him as such is condition of salvation (Rom. x. 9). To deny Him in this His rightful supremacy is to subvert the fundamental conditions of salvation. There is only one thing to be done with our members, viz., that they should be yielded as "servants to righteousness" (Rom. vi. 19). To employ them in any other service is sheer dishonesty. *Third.*—It is sacrilege. The spiritual function of the redeemed person has to be remembered. God dwelt in the Temple of old as a symbol of His dwelling in and with His redeemed and covenanted people. When the shadow gave way to the substance, the place of the marble and golden Temple was taken by the human beings redeemed and brought into covenant with God. "Ye are the Temple of the living God" (2 Cor. vi. 16). We, in the fulness of our human nature, are "an habitation

of God through the Spirit" (Ephes. ii. 22). The thought is wonderful, unspeakable ; but there can be no question as to the matter of fact. The immediate consequences of the fact are obvious. To admit any defilement into God's Temple, to employ His Temple for any other worship than His, is sacrilege of the most guilty kind. This conception of our being God's Temple applies with special force to our bodies. God inhabits us ; we inhabit them ; therefore they contain God. The thing is so obvious that Paul turns upon those who sin in the body with an indignant question—"What! Know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. vi. 19). A bodily member prostituted to blasphemy, drunkenness, fornication, or any unhallowed use, is a deadly crime against the majesty and holiness of the Indwelling God. There are many Christians who seem able to sin in the body with a light heart. There are parts of the country where alcoholic excess is not regarded as a blemish on the character, even of persons eminent for reputation of piety. Elsewhere, even fornication is thought of with indulgence as a trifle. Such estimates run counter to the plain teaching of the New Testament, and exhibit an utterly inadequate conception of what is involved in redemption. Let young men especially lay it to heart that bodily sin means dark deadly guilt, for which there will be a a terrible reckoning, begun in this world, continued in that which is to come.

(*c.*) *Put in practice a wise and strenuous discipline.*—The general aim is self-mastery. We must have the body a ready and fit instrument for the

divine will. The analogy of athletic exercises lies on the surface; and is used by Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 25-27. As the athlete treats his body that it may lend itself to his purpose, training it down till every superfluous ounce of flesh be removed, and nothing remain but the well-knit frame full of grace and strength; so for his higher ends ought the Christian athlete to treat his body, giving it sufficient food and rest for his purpose, and being very careful that it shall never be so pampered as to be a hindrance in reaching the heavenly goal. This general direction raises many questions of detail in the settlement of which, as there is room for Christian liberty, so is there a special call for careful study and wise consideration of all the elements involved. The most pressing of all these questions is that which concerns the use of alcohol. Technical points as to whether alcohol is a food or a poison, as to the efficacy of its use as a medicine, as to the meaning of certain Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible, and the customs of the Jews in ancient times, may be left to specialists. The prominence given to them in discussions of the subject is misleading. The question for the individual lies wholly apart from such matters. Two points are clear. (1) The use of alcohol as a beverage involves risk to the person partaking. (2) Alcohol is in society at large a source of unspeakable evil, and is a prevailing temptation to vast numbers of our fellow human beings and fellow Christians. The Bible lays down no legal command; and therefore the Church ought not to attempt to do so. But it may well be urged upon the conscience of the individual to consider

whether he ought not (*a*) for his own sake, (*b*) for the sake of others, to abstain from the use of alcohol as a beverage. Such arguments as that of Rom. xiv. 15-23 bear very closely on the question, and the conclusion to which they point seems strongly to favour the practice of total abstinence. Whatever be the theory of the matter, there can be no doubt that for persons in full strength, who can do their work on water, the use of alcohol is unnecessary and undesirable.

Such questions may be disputable cases of conscience. If, however, a lust tend to gain the mastery over the will, there is no question as to the plain duty. Paul's habit was, in his own vigorous language, to give his body a knock-down blow. If the lust rises in war against the soul, there is nothing to be done but hit out, straight from the shoulder. Whatever else is permissible, this thing must not be. So Joseph faced round on his tormentor. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" There is no room for debate. There must be studious avoidance of the sources of temptation (2 Tim. ii. 22; 1 Cor. vi. 18). There must be instant suppression of the evil on its first appearance (Col. iii. 5; Rom. viii. 13).

3. CARE OF THE BODY.—The body is not our own; therefore it is to be cared for as particularly as an honest man cares for the property of another. The general aim must be efficiency for the divine uses of the body. It is not only permissible, but our bounden duty to see that this efficiency is fully maintained. To neglect the body, to overwork it, is sin against God, and will receive appropriate

penalty. Many good men, and more good women require this warning. To most, however, it is necessary to point that care of the body must be kept clear of every taint of selfishness. Three aspects of this care may be mentioned. (*a.*) *Dress.*— This is, no doubt, a woman's question mainly. Yet such a creature is known as the male dandy, surely one of the most despicable specimens of our race. Less offensive in some respects, but more common is the sloven, who permits himself to exhibit his dirtiness and untidiness before the public gaze, and has even been known to take a pleasure in these things as proofs of his manly independence ! Clothing unquestionably expresses character. If a man be pure minded, modest, self-denying, honest, he will know how to dress. With respect to women, it does not become a man to speak with any high degree of confidence. It may be alleged, however, without risk of misunderstanding, that the temptation of women is to spend too much pains upon adornments, and the following suggestions from the present point of view may perhaps be offered. *First.*— Dress well. A woman glorifies God by doing all in her power to be beautiful. It is part of her function in the world. Beauty has moral power. That she should be careful in such things is right and fitting. Only be sure to make the noblest types your model. The sense of the beautiful needs training. *Second.*— Be true to nature. Where fashion travesties nature, be brave to break away. Fashion will soon follow. In the name of truth and honesty, as well as for the sake of health and comeliness, abjure all abominations of paint, powder, dyes, and all the devices by

which the weak and vain strive to make themselves other than God intended them to be, and so earn His judgment, and the contempt of the very men for whom such women do these things. *Third.*—Observe a due proportion between expense of dress and the claims of higher concerns. To dress at the expense of health, denying the body its proper nourishment in order to cover it with foolish ornament, is a crime which brings its own penalty. To spend freely on dress, and give grudgingly to the cause of Christ, is a mean and hateful sin. There can be no question that women, even in the middle rank, are now carrying upon their bodies in the shape of needless adornment, the cost of urgently needed developments of Christian work both at home and abroad. In a word, the philosophy of dress for women is summed up in such passages as 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10; 1 Peter iii. 3, 4. The key to dressing well is living well, thinking continually of things that are lovely.

(*b.*) *Health.*—It is obvious that we ought to maintain our bodies in health. We cannot do any kind of work well, if our bodies are not in good order. Above all, in ill-health we are liable to certain forms of temptation, *e.g.*, irritability, evil temper, and alcoholic excess. Ill-health may be sent us by permission of God in the process of His discipline. But for us to injure our health by neglect, or carelessness, or trespass of plain laws of nature, is sin, and leads to sin. This duty may, of course, be perverted into sheer self-indulgence. For a man to withdraw from active work, and spend his life in looking after his health, will need some very strong

justification in the special circumstances of the case. The temptation to weak valetudinarianism must be resisted to the uttermost, else the character will miserably dwindle. Apart from this error, we ought for the sake of the work God calls us to do, to preserve by all means in our power our physical efficiency. We ought to acquaint ourselves with the laws which regulate our physical well-being. Ignorance, in these days of free education and cheap literature, is inexcusable even in the humblest ranks. A clear understanding of these laws is as attainable as any other part of education. The duty of acquiring this kind of information, and putting it into practice, is as binding as the duty of hearing and obeying any other part of the will of God. It is satisfactory to know that, with the development of civilisation, marked improvement has taken place on the whole, but still much requires to be done. Under proper sanitary conditions the death-rate in towns ought to be no more than 12 or 13 per 1000. But in Dublin the death-rate is, or was very recently, 40, implying probably 50 or 60 for the poorer parts of the city. In Edinburgh, the death-rate is still about 21. A great responsibility rests on corporations, but men and women who are, or hope soon to be, householders, have much in their own hands. Especially ought fathers and mothers to instruct their growing boys and girls in certain facts of nature, ignorance of which may work much woe, which a little timely information might have averted.

(*c.*) *Athletics.*—In one respect, modern life is a

vast advance even on comparatively recent periods. The necessity of physical exercise is now well understood, and means are being taken to supply it in the case, not only of men, but of women. This is altogether as it ought to be. At the same time it is not without its dangers. What began as healthful sport may become an all-absorbing pursuit, and instead of being a useful means towards an end, may become an end in itself, and absorb to itself energies of body and soul, which ought to be given to higher things. Take the following hints :—*First.*—If the particular sport in question unfit for work or worship, it ought to be restrained, or even abandoned. Football is a noble game. But if the Saturday be so spent on it that body and soul are unfit for the exercise of worship on Sunday, perhaps even for routine of work on Monday, football has become a snare, and it behoves a young man, who does not regard himself as a mere animal, to keep it within bounds, or even give it up for some less absorbing form of recreation. *Second.*—If the special form of recreation lead to dissipation, it must be avoided. Young men are the custodians of our national sports. Let them see to it that they be so conducted that a man may join in them without fear of contamination, and get the physical good of them without losing the purity of his Christian character. And if things have come to such a pass that gambling and drinking are inextricably associated with them, it is high time for Christian young men to deny themselves the pleasure of them. The experience of many, who are not by any means

effeminate or stupidly old-fashioned, is that in respect to some games, this time has even now come. It is to be hoped this is exceptional. But let all such enjoyments be resigned rather than have any young man lose the integrity of his Christian character.

Third.—The expenses connected with athletics must be carefully regulated, and a proper proportion observed between such expenses and the claims of higher causes. It is to be feared that multitudes of young men have bicycles, who own scarcely a book of standard literature, and contribute nothing to any philanthropic or religious purpose. Contrary to Scripture, they "take pleasure in the *legs* of a man," and, apparently, in no other part of him! A darker side to this question is the undoubted fact that the expensiveness of many amusements leads many foolish lads into debt and dishonesty, with much consequent shame and moral disaster. In all questions of detail with respect to recreation, the scriptures afford no help in the way of legislation. But they present to us a type of character which, if we become assimilated to it, will guide us to a practical solution. Let a young man set his heart on reaching "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Ephes. iv. 13, and he will not be satisfied with any one-sided and distorted growth, but will learn both how to cultivate his body, and at the same time to bring it into subjection, as an element and instrument in the completeness of Christian character.

B. THE MIND.—Without venturing into the fascinating region of animal psychology, or questioning the well-authenticated facts of animal intelligence adduced by so conscientious a writer as the late Professor Romanes, it may be confidently asserted that man is more than a mere animal. He is endowed with "a reasonable soul." There is a mental as well as a physical aspect of his constitution. It is a strange and ominous circumstance that multitudes of young men emerge from our Board Schools without apparently having realised this fact. It is not merely that they have no interest in religion, which is deplorable certainly, but they have no interest in any intellectual concerns. Their whole energy, after their daily tasks are ended, is absorbed in sport. Literature for them has no other representative than the sporting column in the daily newspaper. Their chief intellectual stimulus is the report of the last football match. It would be something, and might lead to more, if young men could lift themselves above the plane of the material, and understand that they have nobler faculties than those of the body, and a higher destiny than merely physical satisfaction.

Neglect of mental power may proceed from an opposite point of view, viz., that man is more and higher even than an intellectual being. Christians have sometimes allowed themselves to use contemptuous language respecting mental endowments and mental culture, which has no warrant in Scripture. There is no slur cast on mind, its improvement and its achievements, from one end of the Bible to the other. Its writers, not only Moses, who had the

education of a prince, but herdmen like Amos, and fishermen like Peter, are men of high intellectual capacity and rich mental culture. The Bible idea of holiness is closely akin to that of wholeness, integrity of being, completeness of life and function. To neglect any part of our constitution as men is to insult Him who designed it, and desires no maimed gift, but a whole burnt-offering, for His praise. In pursuing this thought we note three points :—

1. THE DUTY OF MENTAL CULTURE.—If it be certain that the body has its place and function in the growth of Christian character, it is yet more evident that mind has special ethical importance; and the duty of doing justice to its capacities is yet more obviously binding. (*a.*) Consider the mind as an instrument or organ of the personal life of man. The body works within narrowest limits of space and time. It can affect only what it can immediately touch. To the mind neither space nor time present any limitation. They are forms by which it construes and interprets to itself the manifold fulness of the universe. It inhabits space, and traverses time. It can present to itself objects in remotest space or most distant time, and make them part of its stock. The body, narrowly limited as it is, can effect but little even within these limits. Body can move body; body can never touch or influence mind. The unspeakable folly of those who suppose that by physical force they can affect the progress of mind or spirit has been evident to all thoughtful persons. It is instanced by our Lord as comfort to His disciples in persecution (Luke xii. 4), and has been exemplified not only in the case of

martyrs of the faith, but in the case of witnesses, like Galileo, to intellectual truth. Mind is the mightiest influence in the world. It can bend nature to its purposes, and make material things bear the impress of its conceptions, and carry out its designs. It sways the history of nations, constrains the most turbulent fury, compels the most tumultuous force to obey its purposes. In competition of man with man, victory lies with mental power. The most magnificent brute must yield, in the long run, to the sway of intellectual force. The body is no doubt a very marvellous organ, fearfully and wonderfully made, with a complexity and adjustment of parts which make the study of it of profound and enthralling interest. When all has been said, however, the mind remains yet more marvellous in power, more delicate in structure, more intimately connected with the personal life. With a maimed body, the spiritual life remains intact. Its achievements are undiminished in extent or importance. Let the mind suffer injury, and the man himself ceases to be an effective agent, either in the lower worldly or the higher moral aspect of life. If the care of the body, therefore, as organ and instrument of man, be a binding duty, much more does mental culture stand out as an obligation laid upon us by Him who made us after so sublime a pattern.

(*b.*) The same conclusion forces itself upon us when we consider mind in relation to character. Mental and moral growth cannot be disentangled. It is happily matter of common observation that growth in Christian character is accompanied by heightening

of mental faculty. The Bible heroes were men of culture, though some of them had no conventional education. Their walk with God, their sympathy with spiritual conceptions and purposes, enlarged their mental horizon, quickened their mental powers, made them poets, prophets, historians, and enabled them to write in a diction which, even as it appears in translations, ranks high in literary merit. The same fact appears in our own country. To this day we have peasants who, in all that constitutes real culture, come in no way behind the smartest product of school or college ; and this they owe, unquestionably, to the power of godliness, quickening their whole being, in its intellectual no less than in its moral aspect. It is happily within reach of shepherd and crofter, miner and factory hand, to be a refined and cultured gentleman. Walking with God, holding fellowship in Word, Sacrament, and Prayer with infinite Love, Wisdom, and Holiness, he may attain a fulness of mental power which makes him compeer of the highest intellectual ability. The converse is also true. Mental culture is essential to moral growth. Intellectual interest is necessary to success, even in mechanical employment. The mason, stonecutter, or engineer, increases in efficiency in proportion as he exerts his intellectual power upon the work before him. Much more does this apply to the art of living. The ethical doctrine of Socrates was condensed into the saying, "Virtue is Knowledge." This contains an important truth. To perform an action in blind obedience to law, custom, or convention, is not, strictly speaking, a moral act. The thing done may be formally right,

but we, in doing it, have not moral character. We are mere machines. Only when we see the meaning of the act, relate it consciously to the principle it expresses, and understand its bearing on other persons, are we really moral in the doing of it. Character grows as insight deepens. To be good men we require to think about life. Unless we cultivate mental power, we shall not think clearly. Hence mental culture is directly required in aid of moral growth. There is no premium put on stupidity. Mental indolence is moral fault, which will involve inevitable penalty. When situations of moral perplexity arise, trained intelligence will aid in the application of moral principle ; while the man who has been content to let his intellect lie dormant, and live by moral rule of thumb, will flounder amid doubts, and land himself in serious error. Mental culture is, therefore, the duty of all who admit the obligation of moral excellence.

2. CULTIVATION OF MENTAL FACULTIES.—It is a pity that the science of psychology has hitherto been locked up in books written in an uncouth technical terminology. If we are properly to cultivate mind, we need to know, in outline at any rate, our mental constitution. The task of giving such an outline is, of course, impossible here. It will be enough to dwell on the fact that, just as we ought to develope each member of the body and see that both arms and lower limbs obtain a fair amount of exercise, so we ought to secure that all our mental powers shall be developed together. Of course the exigencies of work require us to concentrate and specialise, and so to use certain of our powers in

excess of others. The botanist requires one set of faculties for his special work, the mathematician another for his, the commercial man for his, and so on. Plainly, however, the man himself is more than botanist, mathematician, or shopkeeper, and, if he is to be a whole man, he cannot afford to neglect any of his mental powers. A man, whose physical energy ran solely to the developing of arm or leg, would be a monster. So the man whose mental power is absorbed in recording observations, or making calculations, or piling up money, is an intellectual and moral monster. It behoves us to see what powers we have, and to bestow careful cultivation on them all. This is true culture. It is easy to make fun of culture, by looking at those in whom it means no more than a way of wearing clothes or using cant phrases. Properly viewed it is noble and right.

By way of illustration, take three great faculties of mind :—

(*a.*) *Reason.*—This is the power by which the things and persons around us become intelligible to us. How, we ask, is knowledge possible? Various philosophical systems rush upon us open-mouthed with conflicting answers. The answer of the Bible, and, let it be said, the answer of the latest and noblest philosophy, is that knowledge is possible because the world outside us is itself a revelation of reason or spirit, with which our reason or spiritual being is in essence one. The work of reason, therefore, is to discover the reason there is in things, and so to trace in the mass of things presented to our observation, order, harmony, and completeness.

This is the task of reason as such, and of every reasonable being. No doubt the task requires special sciences and special men ; but it is none the less the task of all endowed with reason. Men of science are simply our ministers in this very thing. To neglect this task is unworthy of our constitution as men. The attainment of truth is a divine obligation, even when the connection between the fact and our individual interest is not obvious at present. Facts held to be remote and useless, have been found to have intimate connection with our welfare, and have been employed in applied science. The strict correlation of truth and wellbeing may never be fully discovered ; but the duty of seeking truth is printed deep in our mental constitution. The cultivation of reason is, therefore, a plain duty, binding not only on the leisured classes, but on the man of humblest and most laborious employment. To neglect its cultivation is sin. Much more is it sin to pervert its use, and employ it, not to lay bare to our reverent gaze the traces of the working of the divine mind, but to support some prejudice, to prove some opinion, to advance some system of our own. The culture of reason is, therefore, in itself and for its own sake, right and dutiful. It has its reward, however, in moral excellence. It is true, of course, that exercise of reason is accompanied by moral danger, and may give rise to pride, obstinacy, and dogmatism. It is certain, however, that these intellectual vices are notes of the misuse of reason. Reason cannot be truly exercised in pursuit of truth without increasing at the same time the virtues of sincerity, impartiality,

candour, patience, humility, and reverence. Holiness and wisdom are combined in God, and are meant to be combined in the ideal of Christian character.

(*b.*) *Imagination.*—The facts, in which order and harmony lie, as it were, hid, do not always or often occur in exactly the combination required to give at once the idea of the whole of which they are part. The man of Science has to bring his facts from many different quarters, and out of them construct his idea. In this work, imagination plays a great part. It is the power of seeing, or foreseeing, the completed whole in the fragments presented to the eye. Imagination is not solely or properly employed in fiction; its real function is to enable us to see facts in their completeness, and as such it is largely employed in science and history. Its use in moral life is great and important. Its function is to see and to envisage things that are great and good, so that they shall not merely be painfully pieced together by slow process of reason, but shall be flashed upon the inner eye in their glorious fulness. In this operation there are very serious risks, calling for great care in the exercise of this faculty. Barely as a faculty, it will embody in mental pictures evil as well as good; and evil, thus embodied, has most disastrous effects on moral soundness. Imagination uncontrolled may become polluted, may taint or defile character at its birth, may strengthen lust, may seduce or hurry into sin and vice. It may lodge in the mind that which no effort can obliterate, pictures which refuse to vanish, and which gleam out on the ashamed and humiliated soul, long after

conscience has condemned them, the will forsaken them, and even the desire ceased to yearn for them. The control and education of the imagination is, therefore, urgently demanded. Exercise the imagination upon all that is fairest in nature, art, literature. Even dwellers in smoky towns are not excluded from means of cultivating the imagination. The narrowest lane is, like Kant's garden space, *unendlich hoch.* Let the mind be a gallery of noble pictures, and the soul will rise by their contemplation ; Phil. iv. 8.

(*c.*) *Memory.*—This is the power by which things past are kept in perpetual presence before the mind, and thus, distant though they may be, in point of time, are made an element and influence in the life and action of the present. It is plain that all growth in knowledge and in character depends on this great power, which, as men, we possess, of causing the swiftly fleeting years to abide with us, and become formative influences in the living present, and useful guides for days to come, so that the sun stands still on Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, and we live in the light of the never absent past. The culture of memory, therefore, is essential to attainment of moral excellence. Live carefully. Pay rational heed to the events, even comparative trifles, which make up the discipline of daily life. So shall these things stand in memory and be the teachers of the soul in occasions of emergency and perplexity. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise." To let any day pass into the limbo of an unheeded and unencumbered past is folly, a deliberate abandonment of our stand-

ing as men and reversion to the type of animal life, which we may picture to ourselves as a series of impressions, unrelated to a permanent and developing ethical Self. Strictly speaking, the past cannot be forgotten. Here memory stands unique among the powers of mind. Neglect it as we may, it does not become extinct as a faculty. Man cannot forget. Only God can forget. Memory registers deterioration as well as growth. To remember, never to be able to forget the deeds which have manifested the downward trend of character, the loss of our spiritual heritage, would be a doom to whose horror we need not add the physical imagery of worm and flame. Hold this as a deterrent before you, when evil tempts you. From this flee to One, who alone can both forgive and forget, "for," He says, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"; Jer. xxxi. 34.

3. THE USE OF BOOKS.—Mental culture of high and beautiful kind may be possessed by those who have but little access to books; and those who have read many books may remain, in fact, uncultivated. At the same time, books have an influence in mental culture and moral growth which cannot be exaggerated. Books preserve for us the inheritance of the past. Stored in books are the great thoughts by which the ages have summed up the experience of life; the great lives which have moulded history, and formed the guide and inspiration of successive generations. These are our spiritual heritage. We are meant to enter upon it, and by it grow wiser, stronger, nobler. This we can only do by reading. To neglect the use of

books is to cut ourselves off from our rightful inheritance, to make ourselves wilfully poor. Books open out to us an immense field of mental exercise, of purest pleasure, and lead us into the most ennobling companionship. By a little self-denial even the humblest wage-earner can endow himself with all the world's best riches. Sitting in his humble chamber, when the day's work is done, he may pass to the most distant reaches of the universe, and traverse at will the pathway of the stars. Living hard and frugally he may enjoy, when his poor meal is ended, pleasures rarer and higher than the voluptuary can ever know, and may feast his soul on truth, beauty, and goodness. Solitary in his lodgings, he may become the companion of Homer and Dante, of Shakespeare and Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson and Browning. To him they will unveil their secrets, pour out their wealth of mind, and sing their gladdest, their most pathetic, their most solemn lays.

That a young man, with mental power and adequate education, should deliberately prefer the obscenities of the street, the degradations of the public house, the frivolities of the ball-room, is one of the mysteries of human deterioration. Books strengthen our jaded faculties, and enable us to do more efficiently the work of life. If any trade so works its operatives that fatigue of body entirely destroys mental power, and deprives those who would read and improve their minds of the capacity and opportunity for so doing, there is a distinct call for change in the conditions of the occupation. The plea that more time would simply mean more oppor-

tunity for dissipation is a mere excuse of selfishness on the part of those who chiefly profit by the long hours of labour. Where the time is afforded, however, the weight of responsibility rests on the individual workman. If he then abuse the period of rest, and, by his method of spending it, wastes rather than recuperates his powers, he ought to understand he is doing grievous wrong, first, to himself, then, to his employer, above all, to his fellow-workmen, upon whom he brings the burden of an evil reputation, and possibly the forfeiture of the liberty he was unworthy to enjoy. "A man," no doubt, is "a man for a' that," and we may freely discount such mere externalities as rank and wealth. But the man who deliberately allows the noblest part of him to lie waste, and spends in idleness and folly hours in which he might be growing more widely informed, more richly cultivated, is less than a man, and tends ever to sink downward in the scale of moral being.

We ought, therefore, as part of the culture, not only of mind, but of character, to make wise use of books. Take these brief hints. *Read with a purpose.* There are many who read with no higher aim than that they have in view in smoking, to induce a pleasant sensation, and fill their vacant mind with the semblance of occupation. No doubt it is permissible to read as a means of pleasure, and fiction has its place. Even so, however, the dominant purpose of reading must be mental culture. Any work of fiction, which makes the mind incapable of steady effort and lofty thought, stands thereby condemned. A vast proportion of the

fiction which pours weekly from the press is of this ignoble order. *Read systematically.* Choose some definite line of study. The interest of your trade, the annals of your town, the history of your country, open out into fruitful fields of study. The domain of the special sciences awaits you. Biography presents opportunity of noblest exercise. It will go hard with you if you cannot, even in a remote hamlet, find some library, public or private, where your difficulty will be not the scantiness but the wealth of the material provided. Take your line and keep to it, and be not led astray into mere desultory browsing. "Reading, in the case of mere miscellaneous readers, is like the racing of some little dog about the moor, snuffing everything, and catching nothing; but a reader of the right sort finds his prototype in Jacob, who wrestled with an angel all night, and counted himself the better for the bout, though the sinew of his thigh shrank in consequence" (Blackie, "Self-Culture," p. 29).

Read great books. Hear the genial Professor, whose wise and witty counsel has been so welcome: "Stick to the great books, the original books, the fountain-heads of great ideas and noble passions, and you will learn joyfully to dispense with the volumes of accessory talk, by which their virtue has been as frequently obscured as illuminated." Possess yourself of the great book on your subject, and this will act as your guide through its general literature, and will enable you to estimate and use it aright. Above all, read the Bible, which stands *facile princeps* amid the universal literature of the race. By your estimate of this, your mental grasp

and your moral character can be most certainly gauged. In all your study, its steady light will illumine your path. It will absorb into itself, and restate in the light of its own principles, all truth ; and will make its earnest, humble student, as fearless, frank, and broad as itself, while bending him in reverence to Him who in the supreme sense is its Author. *Read no bad book.* It may be that some persons have to read bad books, as pathologists have to study the most loathsome diseases. It is scarcely probable that God calls you to be a moral pathologist. If He ever does, He will let you know by some sure sign. Meantime, avoid such books. They are a moral plague. You don't need to read them to find out what they are. By chance you may begin without knowing what one of them is ; as you might find yourself in evil company without intending it. Then there is one thing to do—act at once, quit the book. Next to bad company, bad books have wrought more moral evil than any other form of wickedness, leaving indelible stains on the imagination, weakening the conscience, distorting the will. There are authors for whom, and for their readers, it had been better, if the first edition of their works had been tied about their necks, and they had been cast into the depths of the sea.

C. CONSCIENCE.—We have thus taken a brief view of man's physical and mental constitution, in relation to the development of Christian character. We now come to study in the same connection his distinctively moral nature. We shall do so under the two heads of conscience and will. Conscience

and will are improperly described as powers possessed by the man, as though he were separable from them. They are, properly speaking, the man himself viewed in his relation to the good and right, as knowing it and doing it. If we speak of them as faculties, we must disengage this phraseology from all mechanical or physical metaphors. Conscience is the man, knowing. Will is the man, doing.

1. THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE.—This subject has been keenly discussed in modern philosophy, since the time of Hobbes (1588-1679). The writer, who has been most distinguished for his vindication of the supremacy of conscience, as well as for the loftiness of his whole moral teaching, is the famous Bishop Butler (1692-1752).

We are not concerned here with such discussions. It is interesting to note, however, that the general ethical teaching of the idealist philosophy, represented by such a man as T. H. Green of Oxford, is in large agreement with the Biblical doctrine of man's moral nature. The leading passage in Scripture dealing with conscience is Rom. ii. 14, 15, the text, it will be remembered, of Butler's Three Sermons on Human Nature. That passage teaches us: *First*, that man has received a revelation of good, sufficient at all stages of his history to make him morally responsible. This revelation has come in different forms to men in different circumstances. To Gentiles, it appears as Nature, "the work of the law," *i.e.*, a course of conduct in conformity with the divine will, being written in their hearts, as the Law of the Ten Words was on the tables of Stone. To the Jews, it appears in distinct articulate form

as the Law, the will of God, directly and explicitly communicated in the Ten Words, and the moral code founded thereon. Now, to all men, it has appeared in Christ, in whom Nature and Law are alike fulfilled, and the highest moral good absolutely realized.

Second, that man is capable of seeing the good thus presented to him, and does, by his inmost nature, approve of it, and bind it upon himself as the highest law of his being. The conscience of man, *i.e.*, the man himself, bears witness along with Nature, Law, and Christ, *i.e.*, along with the voice of God, acknowledges its authority, and claims the surrender of the whole man to it. This is the special application in ethics of the general Biblical doctrine of the constitution of human nature as made in the image of God. Man is in spiritual affinity with God, is meant for God, has that in him which recognises and ratifies the Word of God, and makes him unsatisfied till this word be accepted and done. Conscience is thus not an independent authority, as though it could, apart from God, proclaim what is right, and legislate for man. Conscience summons man to listen to the voice of God speaking in the revelation of His will. Our obligation to do right is not to conscience, but to that God, to whose voice conscience calls us to give heed. Hence "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James iv. 17), not merely moral fault, or crime against conscience, but sin, offence against God to whom conscience is the witness in the heart of man. In the writings of some moralists, conscience seems almost to take the

place of God. The Scriptures countenance no such exaggerated view of conscience. In them, conscience is, like faith, nothing in itself save the apprehension of God. This, however, if it deprives conscience of a fictitious, and indeed, impotent authority, bestows upon it another more real and mighty. Conscience is now to be looked upon as bringing man into spiritual contact with God. It is the organ or faculty by which he becomes aware of the divine will for him, which is at the same time the law of his own highest well-being. Conscience, therefore, is supreme in man's moral nature. It claims obedience, not to itself, but to the absolute will, to which it is the testimony in man's consciousness.

No doubt, there are difficulties in defending the supremacy of conscience. Their gravity, however, is chiefly due to the acceptance of the intuitionist theory of conscience, as though this were the Biblical teaching. If conscience were in man an independent source of infallible moral judgments, the difficulties presented by the fact that the deliverances of conscience have varied from age to age and race to race, would be insuperable. If, however, we see in conscience simply man himself listening to the voice of God, we can understand at once how his power of hearing correctly may have varied in the process of his growth, and how, above all, if we hold the Christian doctrine of sin, the hearing organ itself may have become deteriorated and uncertain. Conscience, we repeat, is not the revelation of right. It is in man the organ of that revelation. Its supremacy is due to this its func-

tion, and is vindicated according as it discharges its function clearly and fully.

2. OUR DUTY TOWARD CONSCIENCE.—Possessed of, or possessed by, a faculty so great in function and influence, we are bound to see that it obtains full scope for its exercise in the making of character and in the work of life. This will include three aspects of duty. (*a.*) *To train it.*—Conscience has been involved in man's moral history. It has suffered through his sin. It shares in his restoration. Man redeemed, having the spring of new life in him, has as the goal of moral development conscience acting freely, swiftly, catching every whisper of the divine will, and instantly calling man to obedience. The aim of training, therefore, must be to heighten the faculty of conscience, making it more delicate in its susceptibility, more intent in its relation to God, more imperative in its relation to man.

The means at our disposal may be classified thus. First, the elementary conditions of moral life amid which man is born, which are gathered into the second table of the decalogue. Only as we observe these obvious rights of life, honour, property, reputation, with all the detailed obligations involved in them, can our conscience be clear, sound, and trustworthy. Any trifling with them, even in name of some lofty spirituality of life or teaching, produces disastrous results to the individual or community which tolerates such conduct. In the home, the school, the market, conscience gains the exercise which is to make it at once strong and delicate, sure in its discrimination, solemn and resolute in its proclamations. Second, the literary expressions of

the moral experience of men. History and biography, which tell of the growth, the triumph, the doom of nations, and unfold the drama of the human soul in struggle, attainment, or defeat, are magnificent instructors and trainers of conscience; and as such ought to be carefully used by all who seek moral strength. Fiction of the noblest kind has here a great field. The masters of this art have presented us with studies of virtues and vices, and of men in various circumstances of temptation, which are invaluable as exercises by which conscience may be trained in grasp of moral fact, fineness of discernment, and urgency of appeal. The tragedies of Shakespeare are the world's manual of ethics, illustrated with examples drawn by a master's hand, enforced by pity and terror, evoked by a master's touch. Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, with many of lesser name, have done work which, viewed as a training for conscience, ought to receive our careful study. Above all, the Bible, apart from any higher aspect, without raising any disputed point, is unquestionably the great moral educator of the race. "By the study of what other book," asks Huxley, who himself did not accept its highest teaching, "could children be so humanised?" The Bible is the touchstone of conscience. Conscience can only be maintained in truth and vigour according as it is continually refreshed by earnest study of the ideal of manhood presented in Scripture, and principally in the character of Jesus Christ. Third, communion with God. Here we are passing from morality into religion. In fellowship with God our whole nature is raised to

its highest power, and conscience shares in the illumination and transfiguration. In that direct spiritual intercommunication which exists between man and God through Jesus Christ, conscience is flooded with light. Man sees with growing clearness what the will of God for him is, and is strengthened to do it. It is not God's way with man to provide him with formulæ of conduct to suit every occasion. He desires a higher thing for man, viz., that, taught of God, he may see in any given situation the purpose of God which requires therein to be fulfilled. This result is not easily or speedily reached. There will be times of weakness, morbid tenderness and scrupulosity, harshness and narrowness. At such times we need to be patient with ourselves; and if we have reached a higher stage, to be most charitable towards those whose conscience is thus immature (1 Cor. viii. 7-13, x. 23-33; Rom. xv. 1, 2), till at last we and they reach a full age, and have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. v. 14). Thus shall the testimony of conscience become an element in our assurance toward God (2 Cor. i. 12; 1 Peter iii. 21).

(*b.*) *To obey it.*—Conscience thus informed and educated by the revealed will of God is the supreme authority in the realm of human life and action. It is a deliberate abandonment of the position to which God designed us to place our conscience in the hands of some "spiritual director," and take his utterances for the very voice of God. No doubt it is much easier thus to hand over the responsibility of our moral guidance to some infallible authority outside of ourselves. But we cannot do so without

at the same time enfeebling our moral powers and lowering our moral tone. God meant us to bear responsibility. We cannot shirk it without becoming morally worse. Our duty is to train our conscience by the means open to us, so that it shall be a true and faithful witness to the will of God, and then to adhere unflinchingly to its declarations. The whole domain of life is to be brought under the sway of conscience. Actions prescribed by external authorities, *e.g.*, the law of the land, are to be performed, not merely under constraint of common custom, but "for conscience sake" (Rom. xiii. 5). Actions for which there is no outward rule are to be brought under the scrutiny of conscience, and so performed "for conscience sake" (1 Cor. x. 25-29). Thus every deed should be penetrated by the conviction of conscience, and submitted to its arbitrament. No doubt a large part of life in Christianised society is regulated by common agreement, so that on the surface there will not be much difference between the man of merely conventional morality and the man who makes a conscience of all he does. At the same time there will be great and important differences lying deeper. The man who obeys conscience will do the same habitual actions as others; but he will do them better, for he perceives the moral issues that belong to them. He will do things right and good which others would not think of, for he keeps his "soul's large window" cleansed from the dimness of selfish desire, and is ever ready to discern and follow the indications of God's will. The morality of mere conventional observances is self-satisfied, proud, and meagre. The morality of

conscience is self-dissatisfied, humble, ever aspiring, ceaseless in its efforts after higher excellence. Conscience thus obeyed is "good" (Acts xxiii. 1; 1 Tim. i. 5, 19; Heb. xiii. 18; 1 Peter iii. 16, 21); not as though the man who thus obeys never does wrong, but because he, the man, the true self, seeks God's glory, will not rest in any attainment short of this, and will not lie still under the weight of unforgiven sin. It is "void of offence toward God and toward man" (Acts xxiv. 16); not because the man never grieves either God or man, but because the glory of God and the good of man constitute the aim of his life; and "pure" (1 Tim. iii. 9; 2 Tim. i. 3), not because the man is sinless, but because he has no doubleness of mind, and heartily seeks to order his life according to the will of God.

Disobedience to conscience is fraught with consequences disastrous to conscience itself. It may be difficult to destroy conscience, but it can be done. Conscience is part of our human nature, and in the vast injury done to human nature through sin, conscience suffers. In this process of injury we observe three steps. *Defilement.* 1 Cor. viii. 7; Titus i. 15. A man disregards the testimony of conscience, and straightway his whole moral nature suffers from the taint of sin. His conscience does not escape. Its perception of moral distinctions has become obscured, it speaks weakly and uncertainly, and even commits grievous errors. His mind and conscience, if he persevere, will become defiled. *Searing.* 1 Tim. iv. 2. As a nerve may be deadened by burning, so conscience, by persistence in known evil, may become reduced to dumbness and impotency.

A man may sin till he has an evil liberty in sinning. It is said of him "he has no conscience." It is profoundly true. Eyes has he, but he sees not, and none of the awful beauty of goodness is perceptible by him. Ears has he, but he hears not, and no voice from the eternal region of right ever reaches him. *Perversion.* Matt. vi. 23. A man may so persistently substitute his own will for God's will, that at length he comes to regard his own will as God's will. His whole nature is thus perverted, turned toward self in the belief and conviction that this is God. In this wheeling of the soul away from the light conscience takes part. It speaks, but its judgments are absolute perversions of truth. The light that is in him is darkness, and how great is that darkness! The annals of the Papacy present instances of this on a grand scale. The records of individual lives, as they are read by the eye of God, present, it cannot be doubted, many such cases, in which sin has procured this awful penalty. Let such a fate serve as warning, and send us back, with the awe of God upon our souls, to the path of constant obedience.

(*c.*) *To vindicate it.*—Hitherto we have looked at conscience as it appears in the individual man, but man himself cannot properly be considered merely as an individual. He must be considered in his relation to his fellows, living among them, modified and influenced by them, finding his own highest welfare in ends which include their welfare also. The community in which he lives, therefore, may be regarded as a spiritual unity, almost as a personality. It has a moral goal, a moral history,

and a moral faculty. There is such a thing as "the public conscience," the conscience not merely of this man or that, but of the body of men living together as a moral organism. The public conscience, like that of the individual, witnesses on behalf of the right and good. It furnishes the spring and motive in obedience to the Law of the State, as an expression of the mind of God. Its main operation, however, lies in the region of conduct beyond the reach of legal enactment and penalty. There are great moral evils which lie in large measure beyond the scope of law. Their suppression or control must lie in the last resort with the conscience of the community. No Act of Parliament can make the country sober; but the conscience of the community, awake, enlightened, active, in all ranks and classes could do it. No legislation can cleanse Scotland of the taint of impurity, which makes our domestic life so dismal, and often so tragic; but the public conscience, operative in every social circle, and in every home, could do it.

Here, therefore, lies the duty of every Christian man, woman, and child, having informed the individual conscience by the revealed will of God, to make known its testimony in the community, and so to educate, enlighten, and quicken the conscience of the community, elevating its standard, and securing the certainty and soundness of its judgments. Let every member of the community make up his mind upon such moral questions as those mentioned above, and bring his mind to bear on all within his reach, and upon the community at large, and so

add the weight of his character and influence to the existing sum of moral sentiment and judgment. As long as alcoholic excess is regarded as indifferent, almost creditable, so long drunkenness will be our national vice. As long as impurity is condoned, excused, or passed over lightly as a "mistake," so long will the blot of prevailing illegitimacy stain our statistics, and the foul stream of uncleanness roll on through crowded slum and sequestered country hamlet. As long, too, as those who do regard drunkenness and impurity as sinful, refrain from uttering their voice regarding these evils, and fail to stimulate public feeling with respect to them, and neglect necessary counsel and warning to their children and others under their influence, so long will these evils prevail among us, and those who thus neglect their duty as Christians incur personal responsibility for them. The reward of such testimony against moral evil has sometimes been death. A classic instance is that of the hermit Telemachus who died in the arena of the Colisæum, and by his death stopped for ever the cruelty of the gladiatorial games. "One habitual crime at least was wiped from the earth by the self-devotion of one humble, obscure, almost nameless man." [a] Often the reward has been misunderstanding, disappointment, and shame; but whatever it be, the path of duty is plain, and must be trodden by all who will be true to God and His light. Failure in fidelity injures the cause of righteousness. It also injures our own souls. We cannot be silent in presence of moral

a Story exquisitely told in Miss Younge's "Book of Golden Deeds."

wrong, without having our moral judgment weakened, our standard lowered, our susceptibilities blunted. Fidelity is itself noblest service to God and man, even though our witness-bearing should not end, in our lifetime at least, in suppression of the wrong against which we testify. Here we touch on mysteries. Like Christ and in fellowship with Him, His faithful people "bear the sin of many, and make intercession for the transgressors." The sins of the nation press upon their spirits. They bear the burden to God in agony of supplication. Such sufferers, disappointed, beaten, crucified, are, in a profounder sense than that in which the phrase is applied to political leaders, "the saviours of their country." God hears them, and for their sakes even Sodom will have its day of grace lengthened out.

D. WILL.—If, in speaking of Conscience, we were afraid to use the term "faculty," lest it should be supposed that it was in any sense separable from the man himself, we may well be much more reluctant to apply it to Will. Here we are not dealing with anything that belongs to man, in the sense in which arms and legs, or even memory and imagination, belong to him. In studying the will we are studying the man. The will is the man. From the first page in which we began this review of human nature in relation to the culture of character, we have been moving from the circumference to the centre. Now we have reached it, and are to consider how the will of man operates in the cultivation of Christian character.

1. THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL.—This subject

is one of the most difficult in the whole round of philosophy or theology, and it has been made the battle ground of many controversies. Its difficulties have been increased, however, by the one-sided views of freedom which conflicting theories have adopted. The commonest view of freedom to be found, both in theory and practice, is that which is technically called "liberty of indifference," and is practically known as liberty to "do as you please." In this form it becomes an object of ambition to many young men and women, whose moral education, however, has scarcely begun till they learn that true freedom is not this, but something quite other.

Three elements may be distinguished in the full conception of freedom :—

(*a.*) *Self-determination.*—In any action there are certain motives, or objects prompting to the performance of the action. One theory maintains that we are always and necessarily determined in action by the motives that are presented to us. Another theory claims that we are free to reject even the strongest motives, and to act without the solicitation of any motive whatever. In point of fact, however, no outward object can move us, till it is taken within the sphere of our conscious life, and is discerned as a means of attaining some end which we consider as good, and ministering to what we conceive as our welfare. The animal is presumably moved, for instance, to eat by presentation of some object fitted to satisfy hunger, without any reference to a Self. Man, however, is moved by the ideal of self-satisfaction obtainable through eating. Eating is,

in him, not mere instinctive movement; it is the action of a Self, aiming at self-realisation. He is, therefore, not determined by objects outside of himself. Neither is he indetermined, his will moving, as it were, *in vacuo*. He is Self-determined. The action originates in and is due to the activity of a Self, or Personality. All action, therefore, which a self-conscious being performs, is *his* action It is his offspring, a portion of his moral being. We act, and the resultant action is ours. We cannot rid ourselves of responsibility for it. Very often we would willingly do so, and relieve ourselves of moral accountability by pointing out that the action was rendered necessary by circumstances, or by some strange solicitation, or some inherent weakness transmitted from a remote past through a line of ancestors. In fact, however, we could not have acted at all, save as there was reference in the motive to a Self, which we are, and by whose decision the action is performed.

The motive may have come to us from the outside; it could not move us till it was taken inside, and made an element in our ideal of what is good for us. When we act, therefore, whatever the prompting may be, whencesoever it may have arisen, and howsoever strong it may be, we act in name and by the power of the Self or Personality, which we are. Medical science and criminal law necessarily, to a large extent, discount this aspect of accountability, and the treatment of criminals will be profoundly modified by the scientific doctrine of heredity. In our judgments of one another, also, we are bound in charity to restrain our condemna-

tion by remembering the nature of the solicitations to evil that have beset any individual sinner. But in judging ourselves, we are never to allow any smattering of scientific knowledge to delude us into believing that we are not accountable for our actions. In dealing with the sunken and degraded also, we will be doing them no good if we condone their evil by a theory which denies to them capacity of repentance and reformation. We have still to charge upon them their actions as their own. This will lead them into conviction of sin. It will at the same time point the way of deliverance. They are not mere products of circumstances. They are personalities, and may rise above circumstances, in virtue of that very power by which they have degraded themselves. Christianity differs from the ethics of materialism at once in the severity and in the hopefulness of its view of man. It lays upon man the burden of his guilt, and at the same time preaches to him the hope of deliverance; and it does both, because it clings to the conception, itself justified by the ripest philosophy of the day—of man as a Self, Self-determined and responsible, in all his actions.

(*b.*) *Moral Choice.*—To man thus standing at the centre of his moral life, determining its issues, there is revealed, as we saw in considering Rom. ii. 14, 15 (*see* above, p. 87), the will of God, progressively, through nature, law, and Christ. To this revelation conscience bears witness, testifying that it is laid as an obligative upon a being, morally constituted as man is, to do this will, and choose it as the supreme regulative principle of his life, promising,

at the same time, that if he will do this, he shall attain to the fulness of his own nature.

In the nature of the case, therefore, there comes in every moral history a period of crisis in which the great decision has to be made, and the man has to identify himself with the supreme good and right, or else to decline to do so. In this position the man stands alone. Before him are the two ways. He, a personal being, self-determining, and responsible, must choose. Neither God nor man can fix his choice for him. In what intellectual form, or under what circumstances this choice will present itself to any individual man, will vary according to differences of age, rank, descent, education, occupation. Each individual history has something in it unique. Fundamentally, however, the alternative lies between God and the world, between Christ and self. With profound insight the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews thus represents the decision of Moses, as lying between "the pleasures of sin" and "the reproach of Christ" (Heb. xi. 24-26). In all the Bible biographies we see the same issue presented. We read it in the leading characters of secular history. It belongs to every individual man. Nothing can exceed the solemnity of this thought.

The question is grievously complicated by the sinful bias of our nature. We could imagine a moral development in which this crisis was passed through simply without any strain put upon the will. The man would see the good, and forthwith make himself one with it, clearly discerning that it was at once an obligation binding on him, and the

condition of his own welfare. In fact, however, men do not invariably and easily make this decision. The first instinct is to decline to make this decision. The prevailing tendency is to oppose to the supremacy of the will of God the independence of self-will. The prevailing delusion is that this independence constitutes freedom, that by surrendering this independence a man, in some sort, injures himself, and deprives himself of his rights. Whereas the truth is, that in refusing to identify himself with the will of God, which is the very law of his well-being, a man does himself deadly injury, and brings himself into bondage. Self-will is not freedom; it is servitude of a peculiarly galling nature. The will, declining to accept the will of God, loses its freedom, and becomes the slave of external solicitations. It may often be noted that a man has a weak will, weak in respect to good, incapable of stedfast pursuit of righteousness, while the same man has a strong will toward evil. That is to say, he has rejected the will of God, which, being accepted, would endow him with freedom and strength, and, in consequence, his will power has been submerged by strong desires and passions, and acts only towards their gratification. Young men ought to understand that, when they say or think, that the life of obedience to God is poor-spirited and unmanly, while the life of self-gratification is gallant and free, they are exactly reversing the true estimate of things. That life is heroic, noble, in the highest sense manly, which is under the dominion of Christ. That life is poor, empty, and unworthy of man's true dignity which is under no guidance but that of self-will.

(*c.*) *Self-surrender.*—We now see wherein true freedom consists. It does not lie in mere arbitrariness of will. It is reached through self-surrender. It consists in the identity of man's will with God's will. When man's will has thus been yielded to God, it is for the first time free and strong, because now it wills that which is the highest good for man. The greatest proof and illustration are to be found in Christ. No one will question His complete manhood, His entire and glorious strength of character; yet we see how He received His will, not as an independent power to be grasped at, but as an independence to be always and wholly yielded up (John iv. 34; v. 30; vi. 38. The outcome of His redemption work, moreover, is viewed in the New Testament as the freedom of man, a freedom which consists in emancipation from self-will, and harmony with the will of God, a freedom which, as it is maintained through perpetual surrender, issues in a splendid fixity which renders any other choice than that of the will of God impossible (John viii. 31, 32; Rom. viii. 21; 2 Cor. iii. 17; 1 Peter ii. 16). A man's true liberty is not inconsistent with his being the bond slave of Christ, but is in truth only attained through his thus wholly yielding himself to Christ. This thought finds expression in Tennyson's sublime invocation introductory to his great poem "In Memoriam," where he attributes to Christ the perfect ideal of manhood, and points out how we may become assimilated to it.

"Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest, manhood thou:
Our wills are ours we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

2. THE TRAINING OF THE WILL.—Such being the true idea of freedom of will and strength of character, our aim must be to train our wills in steady and habitual concentration upon the will of God, so that we may will to do God's will strenuously, resolutely, in complete mastery over every opposing solicitation. A most important part of this training, no doubt, belongs to the period when we are integral parts of the home. At this stage parents are under most solemn obligation to train the wills of their children. In the home children ought to be taught by precept—above all, by example that self-indulgence is not the highest good, that self-denial is the path to true greatness and happiness. Soon, however, the training passes into our own hands. Here we have to contend with a great evil. There is, as it were, a subtle and unexpressed consciousness of the impending crisis, spoken of above, when the alternative of God and the world, Christ and self, presents itself to the will; with a persistent desire to evade the necessity of choice. Many who would be averse to choosing the evil employ, with instinctive cunning, every artifice to avoid having to choose at all. They will, for instance, submit to all kinds of general exhortation; but will shrink from and resent anything like dealing at close quarters. Let them understand that Indecision is the worst kind of Decision. There is more hope for those who have clearly decided for Self, than for those who decline to decide for Christ. The necessity of deciding in one direction or the other is well brought out in Browning's poem of "The Statue and the Bust." Here we have the

story of two persons who refrained from committing a sin, not from any sense of its sinfulness, or any distinct choice of the right, but simply from want of resolution, what in Scotland we call *fecklessness.* This the poet regards, not as a virtue, but actually as a worse evil than the commission of the sin would have been :

> " The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
> Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
> Tho' the end in sight was a vice, I say."

The undecided man becomes emasculated. His will dissolves into a kind of pulp. He is henceforth good for nothing, a moral waste, which even the Devil must despise !

All means, therefore, must be used to strengthen the will, *i.e.*, to deliver it from the ignominy of irresolution, and the caprice of self-assertion, and train it to a ready and determined acceptance and performance of the will of God. Among these, which in the nature of the case vary from one individual to another, may be mentioned specially :

(*a.*) *Submission to all constituted authority.*—This may be urged as a duty from various points of view (Rom. xiii. 1-5 ; Titus iii. 1 ; 1 Peter ii. 13-18 ; v. 5 ; Heb. xiii. 17). But the valuable effect of such submission as a discipline for the will ought not to be overlooked. Young men find the period in which they are passing beyond the stage of childhood, and yet remain under the family roof, often very trying. The restraints of parental authority they feel to be irksome. Painful scenes are apt to take place ; sometimes ending in rupture, the young man flinging off the restraints altogether, and, being now

able to support himself, leaving home for the sweets of liberty. Let it be granted that the situation is in itself difficult, that parents are not always wise, and are apt to forget that their sons are no longer children. Yet let young men be well assured that the self-mastery gained by voluntary submission is worth all the pains, and that the sweets of liberty are dearly bought by the forfeiture of a most valuable and much needed training in self-surrender. Similarly in the church, officebearers and Christian workers are often persuaded that they have plans wiser than those adopted by majorities in courts or societies. They feel it irksome to submit to conditions thus imposed on them; and they permit themselves to use rude and violent language, or even to withdraw altogether from the work. Here also it may be freely admitted that the individual is often right, and the majority wrong. None the less, submission is better than self-assertion; better in the long run for the work, and better in any case for the individual as an exercise in self-control.

(*b.*) *Prompt performance of every duty to which conscience bears witness.*—Procrastination is the thief of time; but it steals more than time. It steals will power. By every duty postponed in wantonness or idleness, the will is weakened. Its action, in higher things, becomes enfeebled, and the whole Christian life suffers. Those whose lives are not regulated by the factory or school bell need to be specially careful. Students, ministers, and professional men generally, need to see to it that the absence of a mechanical regulation of their life is compensated for by the more energetic inward control.

(*c.*) *Gymnastic exercises.*—It is true that the best means of training lie in the ordinary incidents of life, as these emerge day by day. But we ought not to despise special means, devised as gymnastic exercises, for the training and strengthening of the will. It is well known that Romanism has been skilful in elaborating such exercises, till in the system of Jesuitism the system has reached a marvellous completeness. The danger here is that what began as healthy exercise has become legal bondage ; and the result has been that the will instead of being strengthened has been crushed. In the typical Jesuit, his will has been extinguished, and has been replaced by a non-moral habit of obedience to external authority. The Scriptures, however, recognise three leading forms of exercise, and it will be a pity if our recoil from Romanism should lead us to neglect them. These are Fasting, Alms-giving, and Prayer (Matt. vi. 1-18). These are duties which are enjoined from other points of view ; but they serve also as means of training the will, leading it to identification with the will of God, and emancipation from and mastery over the instincts, passions, and powers of human nature. Fasting, including all kinds of restraint in food and drink, aids the mastery of the will over physical demands. Alms-giving, including every form of Christian liberality, aids the mastery of the will over the instincts of accumulation. Prayer, including all ordinances of worship, aids the mastery of the will over the whole nature, as it tends, through its sinful bias, to turn away from God. Regularity in the practice of these exercises will produce that ease and steadiness in the opera-

tion of the will, which characterises the progressive development of Christian character.

3. THE OPERATION OF THE WILL.—The aim of the will in the culture of Christian character is clear. It is to realise in man as an individual, and in the whole field of his life, the will of God as supreme; or, in other words, to vindicate the sovereignty of Christ in man. As that is progressively achieved, the character grows towards its goal of Christlikeness. We bring these pages to a close by a too brief consideration of the work of will in the discharge of this its great vocation. (*a.*) *The material.*—In general, the material with which will has to work is human nature, in its material, mental and moral aspects, a brief survey of which has been taken above. This material, however, is not the same in each individual specimen of the race, else the work of will would tend to be mechanical, and the product of its operation vary no more than the product of a number of machines working up in the same way the same raw material. In fact, it differs infinitely from man to man. No two specimens of the race are entirely alike. The differences, therefore, defy enumeration. Some broad divisions, however, may be traced. In the first place, there are differences due to special constitution. *First*—Sex. Obviously a whole world of differences, physical, mental, and moral, are conjured up by this word; and a whole volume devoted to the subject would probably leave each sex in some considerable degree unsatisfied with the treatment. Suffice it to say that the sexes have each their weaknesses, their points of strength, their special adapta-

bilities, with all of which will has to reckon in the making of character. *Second*—Temperament. Each individual has a peculiar temperament, or, as it has been called, "fundamental mood," which determines the special aspect that the character will present as it is wrought up by the will. It is usual to give a classification of four temperaments, which probably corresponds roughly with the facts, though it is entirely unscientific, and cannot be applied in any abstract way in the study of special cases.

The *phlegmatic* temperament has its fundamental mood in rest or stability; its prevailing temptation in insensibility and sloth. The *sanguine* temperament has its fundamental mood in ready susceptibility and openness to impressions from without: its prevailing temptation in flightiness and superficiality. The *melancholic* temperament has its fundamental mood in solitary withdrawal into one's self; its prevailing temptation, in moodiness, unpractical dreaming, and useless sorrow. The *choleric* temperament has its fundamental mood in impulsive energy, eager for employment in the world around; its prevailing temptation in obstinacy, narrowness, and bad temper. Plainly the task of will is endlessly varied by such distinctions. *Third*—Talent. Individuals vary in their special gifts. These form the determining elements in the special work the individual undertakes, and in most important ways mould the life he is to live. The will has a mighty task in the control and consecration of such gifts and abilities, a task varying as do the special powers of mind or body.

In the second place, there are wide differences,

due to special circumstances, all of which demand peculiar treatment. Such are: *Age.* It is obviously impossible to apply the same treatment to the child as to the man, or expect the same results from the one as from the other. The will has a distinct task and a distinct mode of working in each case, and the product will also vary. There is a child type of Christian character, and there is a manly type. *Rank.* The same opportunities do not belong to the poor man as to the rich; the same work does not fall to him to do. Each, therefore, has special lines of duty to follow, and in each special virtues are called for. *Calling.* Each career, handicraft, trade, or profession makes necessary special exercise of powers, affords special aspects of self-denial, and provides special forms of temptation, all of which require special attention from the will.

These differences, therefore, cause the operation of will to vary in each individual. Hence the moral life loses all suspicion of dreariness or monotony. The study of character in others, the culture of character in ourselves, becomes profoundly interesting. *Ennui* is impossible to the man who understands his business in the culture of his own character. His moral life unfolds itself to him as a history wherein there are victories and defeats, disappointments and achievements that rival, and indeed excel, in thrilling interest any that are recorded in fiction.

This also makes it impossible for one man to apply any set of rules to another, and teaches moderation in judgment and charity in opinion. In no case do we know precisely the material which

the will had before it. Therefore we cannot judge what means are best, how long the process may take, or through what stages it may have to pass. Let the parable of the seed growing secretly teach us wisdom in our estimate of ourselves and of others (Mark iv. 26-29).

These differences, however, are not differences of fundamental type of character. The one supreme type is Christ. This unity, however, is not a bare hard identity, a kind of Procrustes bed. Rather is it the unity of life, which admits of differences, and is indeed their perfect harmony. We are required to "be perfect"; but the perfection of one is not the perfection of another, while in both it is Christlikeness. In Christ we live, and to Christ we grow. Yet we all remain ourselves, with distinct individuality, gaining, not losing, through our relation to Christ, the fulness of our personal being, as it is said, "Ye are complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10).

(*b.*) *The Process.*—Infinitely varied as the operations of the will must be in the formation of character, there are three steps which are clearly distinguishable, and stand in closest relations to one another.

First.—The Act. An object comes within the sphere of man's conscious life. His will is now summoned to action. It may either accept this object, and make it one of the modes in which the Self seeks the ideal good, or it may reject the object, and cast it out of the line of the man's moral advance. In this act, accordingly, the will puts forth its energy. This act manifests the Self. Action, therefore, is most momentous. There are historic actions, which

involved tremendous issues, as when Louis XIV. signed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In reality each action we perform has endless consequences, as it passes into and determines the course of our moral life.

Second.—The Habit. Acts repeated link themselves into a chain of habit, in which the distinct and separate activity of the will tends to become ever more completely submerged in the dominance of custom, while yet the habit as a whole is the work of will, and implies responsibility. A man may commit a sin which is simply an incident in a habit formed long ago, and scarcely required a specific act of will to bring it about; yet for that sin the man is responsible, seeing that it may be traced back to original initiative of his will. There is nothing more tragic in moral history than the ease with which repeated acts grow into habits whose iron weight shall make life a burden, and deliverance all but impossible. Alcoholic excess presents an obvious illustration, but the process is not confined to sins of the body. It goes on even with greater subtlety, rapidity, and power in sins more refined in quality. Sins of imagination tend to become readily habitual, and are hard to overcome. Untruthfulness may become a vice in those who recognise and even aspire after a high type of spiritual experience. No man is safe, unless he watch with scrupulous care and most jealous inspection the transition of act into habit.

Third.—Character. Acts and habits are the fibre out of which the vesture of character is woven. This is the final issue of the operations of will.

Here then we have a solemn sequence, Acts, Habits, Character. Now, however, we have to add a fact even more significant. Not only does will make character; but character fixes will. This reaction of character upon will increases in incalculable degree the movement of the soul upward or downward. Behind the will there gathers the whole force of a character which will has been developing, either in union with the highest good or in opposition to it. Thus the will is constrained to act in a definite direction by a force it has itself stored up, and to which it has itself given a certain tendency. The most conspicuous Biblical example is that of Pharaoh, whose character thus hardened his heart, and determined his will to evil, so that his being hardened was at once his own doing and the judgment of God upon him. In literature, we have Macbeth, who is caught in the meshes of his own action, and has his future determined by his past. In the life of every individual, as his moral history proceeds, it becomes more and more true that the act is the embodiment of the character, so that, observing the conduct, we can read the character, or, knowing the character, we can predict the conduct. Let young men and women well understand that moral life is not the sphere of caprice, that here also law bears sway. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Sow selfwill, and you will reap ultimate hardening in antagonism to God and goodness.

(*c.*) *The Power.*—This study of character will have failed altogether if it has not brought out the twofold aspect of the development of the Christian type. In

the first two chapters we sought to discern the divine aspect. Since then we have been dwelling on the human. Let us now bring them both together. Christian character is at one and the same time the work of will and the work of grace. It is God's work; yet it is not wrought apart from man or against his will. It is man's work; yet it is not wrought without God—would be a miserable failure without Him. Philosophically or theologically, it is very difficult to combine these aspects in one view or statement. As matter of experience or moral teaching, the matter is plain enough. No unsophisticated mind is ever perplexed by hearing that the power is all of God, while at the same time the end will never be reached unless he put forth all the energy of his will to reach it. This may be called a paradox, but it is one whose solution lies in life, not in theory. Christ is the source of Christian character. He tells us what it is. We see it perfectly realised in Him. By His redeeming work, it has been made a possibility for us. By His indwelling through the Spirit, we also are enabled to reach it.

Two things, therefore, we have to do. *First.*—To appropriate the divine power thus stored up in Christ, and communicated by the Spirit. We do this mainly in actings of soul toward Christ. (*a*) Receiving Him; John i. 12. He is in us our life; Col. iii. 3. Without Him we can do nothing; John xv. 5. (*b*) Abiding in Him; John xv. 4-7. We are to maintain this attitude towards Him of constant receptivity so that His life and power may be poured into us. (*c*) Beholding Him; 2 Cor. iii. 18. He is the revelation of God, the revelation of holiness.

We are transfigured by beholding. If we fulfil these conditions, the power of God which Christ has and is becomes ours, and is available for our growth in Christlikeness. Thus He of God is made unto us sanctification ; 1 Cor. i. 30.

Second.—To set to work ourselves in the name of Christ, and in dependence on His Spirit. The intensity of our personal responsibility, and the abundance of our resources are expressed in such passages as Phil. ii. 12, 13 ; and 2 Peter i. 3-7. We can work out, only because God works in. We can add on our part diligence, only because we are partakers of the divine nature. Similarly because God graciously works in us, therefore we must work out our salvation ; and because we have been made partakers of so mighty a privilege, we must see to it that no diligence is lacking on our part. By sparing no pains on this business of cultivating the Christian character, not only are we furthering our own highest welfare, but we are rendering noblest service to our fellowmen. Not by finished products, if such there were, would men be so much benefited, as they are by characters, which, though imperfect, "are being changed." We may never do any outstanding deed for the amelioration of the race ; but if we have lived to be light and strength to some struggling soul, we shall not have lived in vain. There is no higher honour than to have said of us the words, which Pompilia spoke regarding her friend, as she passed into the eternal day :—

> "Through such souls alone
> God, stooping, shows sufficient of His light
> For us i' the dark to rise by ; and I rise."

Then, when the process of discipline is ended, our imperfections shall fall from us, and we shall reach the goal. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

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